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THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME

X

"My father stood up and bowed bareheaded."

CHAP 40

GEORGE MEREDITH

THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND

VOL. II

Memorial Edition

12145

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1910

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ILLUSTRATIONS

The following are selected from the illustrations by George Du Maurier accompanying the serial issue of the story in the *Cornhill Magazine*:—

'MY FATHER STOOD UP AND BOWED, BAREHEADED' *Frontispiece*

'KIOMI, OLD FRIEND!' . . . *Facing page* 536

'ONE HAND SHE WAS OBLIGED TO SURRENDER.
I KISSED IT.' . . . . . ,, 655

These words appeared in the Cornhill Magazine, *but were omitted by the Author when he revised the text for publication in book form.*

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHAT CAME OF A SHILLING

THE surgeon, who attended us both, loudly admired our mutual delicacy in sparing arteries and vital organs : but a bullet cuts a rougher pathway than the neat steel blade, and I was prostrate when the prince came to press my hand on his departure for his quarters at Laibach. The utterly unreasonable nature of a duel was manifested by his declaring to me, that he was now satisfied I did not mean to insult him and then laugh at him. We must regard it rather as a sudorific for feverish blood and brains. I felt my wound acutely, seeing his brisk step when he retired. Having overthrown me bodily, it threw my heart back to its first emotions, and I yearned to set eyes on my father, with a haunting sense that I had of late injured him and owed him reparation. It vanished after he had been in my room an hour, to return when he had quitted it, and incessantly and inexplicably it went and came in this manner. He was depressed. I longed for drollery, relieved only by chance allusions to my beloved one, whereas he could not conceal his wish to turn the stupid duel to account.

'Pencil a line to her,' he entreated me, and dictated his idea of a moving line, adding urgently, that the crippled letters would be affecting to her, as to the Great Frederick his last review of his invalid veterans. 'Your name—the signature of your name alone, darling Richie,' and he traced a crooked scrawl with a forefinger,—'"Still, dearest angel, in contempt of death and blood, I am yours to eternity, Harry Lepel Richmond, sometimes

called Roy—a point for your decision in the future, should the breath everlastingly devoted to the most celestial of her sex, continue to animate the frame that would rise on wings to say adieu! adieu!"—Richie, just a sentence?'

He was distracting.

His natural tenderness and neatness of hand qualified him for spreading peace in a sick-room; but he was too full of life and his scheme, and knowing me out of danger, he could not forbear giving his despondency an outlet. I heard him exclaim in big sighs: 'Heavens! how near!' and again, 'She must hear of it!' Never was man so incorrigibly dramatic.

He would walk up to a bookcase and take down a volume, when the interjectional fit waxed violent, flip the pages, affecting a perplexity he would assuredly have been struck by had he perused them, and read, as he did once,—'Italy, the land of the sun! and she is to be hurried away there, and we are left to groan. The conspiracy is infamous! One of the Family takes it upon himself to murder us! and she is to be hurried out of hearing! And so we are to have the blood of the Roys spilt for nothing?—no!' and he shut up the book with a report, and bounded to my side to beg pardon of me. From his particular abuse of the margravine, the iteration of certain phrases, which he uttered to denounce and defy them, I gathered that an interview had passed between the two, and that she had notified a blockade against all letters addressed to the princess. He half admitted having rushed to the palace on his road to me.

'But, Richie,' said he, pressing me again to write the moving line, 'a letter with a broad black border addressed by *me* might pass.' He looked mournfully astute. 'The margravine might say to herself,—"Here 's Doctor Death in full diploma come to cure the wench of her infatuation."

I am but quoting the coarse old woman, Richie ; confusion on her and me ! for I like her. It might pass in my handwriting, with a smudge for paternal grief—it might. "To Her Serene Highness the Margravine of Rippau, etc., etc., etc., in trust for the Most Exalted the Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld." I transpose or omit a title or so. "Aha !" says she, "there 's *verwirrung* in Roy's poor head, poor fellow ; the boy has sunk to a certainty. Here (to the princess), it seems, my dear, this is for you. Pray do not communicate the contents for a day or so, or a month." '

His imitation of the margravine was the pleasantest thing I heard from him. The princess's maid and confidante, he regretted to state, was incorruptible, which I knew. That line of Ottilia's writing, 'Violets are over,' read by me in view of the root-mountain of the Royal House of Princes, scoffed at me insufferably whenever my father showed me these openings of his mind, until I was dragged down to think almost that I had not loved the woman and noble soul, but only the glorified princess —the carved gilt frame instead of the divine portrait ! a shameful acrid suspicion, ransacking my conscience with the thrusting in of a foul torch here and there.

For why had I shunned him of late ? How was it that he tortured me now ? Did I in no degree participate in the poignant savour of his scheme ? Such questionings set me flushing in deadly chills. My brain was weak, my heart exhausted, my body seemed truthful perforce and confessed on the rack. I could not deny that I had partly, insensibly clung to the vain glitter of hereditary distinction, my father's pitfall ; taking it for a substantial foothold, when a young man of wit and sensibility and, mark you, true pride, would have made it his first care to trample that under heel. Excellent is pride ; but oh ! be sure of its foundations before you go on building

monument high. I know nothing to equal the anguish of an examination of the basis of one's pride that discovers it not solidly fixed; an imposing, self-imposing structure, piled upon empty cellarage. It will inevitably, like a tree striking bad soil, betray itself at the top with time. And the anguish I speak of will be the sole healthy sign about you. Whether in the middle of life it is adviseable to descend the pedestal altogether, I dare not say. Few take the precaution to build a flight of steps inside—it is not a labour to be proud of; fewer like to let themselves down in the public eye—it amounts to a castigation; you must, I fear, remain up there, and accept your chance in toppling over. But in any case, delude yourself as you please, your lofty baldness will assuredly be seen with time. Meanwhile, you cannot escape the internal intimations of your unsoundness. A man's pride is the front and headpiece of his character, his soul's support or snare. Look to it in youth. I have to thank the interminable hours on my wretched sick-bed for a singularly beneficial investigation of the ledger of my deeds and omissions and moral stock. Perhaps it has already struck you that one who takes the trouble to sit and write his history for as large a world as he can obtain, and shape his style to harmonize with every development of his nature, can no longer have much of the hard grain of pride in him. A proud puppet-showman blowing into Pandæan pipes is an inconceivable object, except to those who judge of characteristics from posture.

It began to be observed by others that my father was not the most comforting of nurses to me. My landlady brought a young girl up to my room, and introduced her under the name of Lieschen, saying that she had for a long time been interested in me, and had been diligent in calling to inquire for news of my condition. Commanded to speak for herself, this Lieschen coloured and said

demurely, ' I am in service here, sir, among good-hearted people, who will give me liberty to watch by you, for three hours of the afternoon and three of the early part of the night, if you will honour me.'

My father took her shoulder between finger and thumb, and slightly shook her to each ejaculation of his emphatic ' No ! no ! no ! no ! What ! a young maiden nurse to a convalescent young gentleman ! Why, goodness gracious me ! Eh ? '

She looked at me softly, and I said I wished her to come.

My father appealed to the sagacity of the matron. So jealous was he of a suggested partner in his task that he had refused my earnest requests to have Mr. Peterborough to share the hours of watching by my side. The visits of college friends and acquaintances were cut very short, he soon reduced them to talk in a hush with thumbs and nods and eyebrows ; and if it had not been so annoying to me, I could have laughed at his method of accustoming the regular visitors to make ready, immediately after greeting, for his affectionate dismissal of them. Lieschen went away with the mute blessing of his finger on one of her modest dimples ; but, to his amazement, she returned in the evening. He gave her a lecture, to which she listened attentively, and came again in the morning. He was petrified. ' Idiots, insects, women, and the salt sea ocean ! ' said he, to indicate a list of the untameables, without distressing the one present, and, acknowledging himself beaten, he ruefully accepted his holiday.

The girl was like sweet Spring in my room. She spoke of Sarkeld familiarly. She was born in that neighbourhood, she informed me, and had been educated by a dear great lady. Her smile of pleasure on entering the room one morning, and seeing me dressed and sitting in a grandfatherly chair by the breezy window, was like a

salutation of returning health. My father made another stand against the usurper of his privileges; he refused to go out.

'Then must I go,' said Lieschen, 'for two are not allowed here.'

'No! don't leave me,' I begged of her, and stretched out my hands for hers, while she gazed sadly from the doorway. He suspected some foolishness or he was actually jealous. 'Hum—oh!' He went forth with a murmured groan.

She deceived me by taking her seat in perfect repose.

After smoothing her apron, 'Now I must go,' she said.

'What! to leave me here alone?'

She looked at the clock, and leaned out of the window.

'Not alone; oh, not alone!' the girl exclaimed. 'And please, please do not mention me—presently. Hark! do you hear wheels? Your heart must not beat. Now farewell. You will not be alone: at least, so I think. See what I wear, dear Mr. Patient!' She drew from her bosom, attached to a piece of blue ribbon, the half of an English shilling, kissed it, and blew a soft farewell to me.

She had not been long gone when the Princess Ottilia stood in her place.

A shilling tossed by an English boy to a couple of little foreign girls in a woodman's hut!—you would not expect it to withstand the common fate of silver coins, and preserve mysterious virtues by living celibate, neither multiplying nor reduced, ultimately to play the part of a powerful magician in bringing the boy grown man to the feet of an illustrious lady, and her to his side in sickness, treasonably to the laws of her station. The little women quarrelled over it, and snatched and hid and contemplated it in secret, each in her turn, until the strife it engendered was put an end to by a doughty

smith, their mother's brother, who divided it into equal halves, through which he drove a hole, and the pieces being now thrown out of the currency, each one wore her share of it in her bosom from that time, proudly appeased. They were not ordinary peasant children, and happily for them they had another friend that was not a bird of passage, and was endowed by nature and position to do the work of an angel. She had them educated to read, write, and knit, and learn pretty manners, and in good season she took one of the sisters to wait on her own person. The second went, upon her recommendation, into the household of a Professor of a neighbouring University. But neither of them abjured her superstitious belief in the proved merits of the talisman she wore. So when they saw the careless giver again they remembered him; their gratitude was as fresh as on that romantic morning of their childhood, and they resolved without concert to serve him after their own fashion, and quickly spied a way to it. They were German girls.

You are now enabled to guess more than was known to Ottilia and me of the curious agency at work to shuffle us together. The doors of her suite in the palace were barred against letters addressed to the princess; the delivery of letters to her was interdicted, she consenting, yet she found one: it lay on the broad walk of the orange-trees, between the pleasure and the fruit-gardens, as if dropped by a falcon in mid air. Ottilia beheld it, and started. Her little maid walking close by, exclaimed, scuttling round in front of her the while like an urchin in sabots, 'Ha! what is it? a snake? let me! let me!' The guileless mistress replied, 'A letter!' Whereupon the maid said: 'Not a window near! and no wall neither! Why, dearest princess, we have walked up and down here a dozen times and not seen it staring at us! Oh, my good

heaven!' The letter was seized and opened, and Ottilia read :—

'He who loves you with his heart has been cruelly used. They have shot him. He is not dead. He must not die. He is where he has studied since long. He has his medicine and doctors, and they say the bullet did not lodge. He has not the sight that cures. Now is he, the strong young man, laid helpless at anybody's mercy.'

She supped at her father's table, and amused the margravine and him alternately with cards and a sonata. Before twelve at midnight she was driving on the road to the University, saying farewell to what her mind reverenced, so that her lover might but have sight of her. She imagined I had been assassinated. For a long time, and most pertinaciously, this idea dwelt with her. I could not dispossess her of it, even after uttering the word 'duel' I know not how often. I had flatly to relate the whole of the circumstances.

'But Otto is no assassin,' she cried out.

What was that she reverenced? It was what she jeopardized—her state, her rank, her dignity as princess and daughter of an ancient House, things typical to her of sovereign duties, and the high seclusion of her name. To her the escapades of foolish damsels were abominable. The laws of society as well as of her exalted station were in harmony with her intelligence. She thought them good, but obeyed them as a subject, not slavishly : she claimed the right to exercise her trained reason. The modestest, humblest, sweetest of women, undervaluing nothing that she possessed, least of all what was due from her to others, she could go whithersoever her reason directed her, putting anything aside to act justly according to her light. Nor would she have had cause to repent had I been the man she held me to be. Even with me she

had not behaved precipitately. My course of probation was severe and long before she allowed her heart to speak.

Pale from a sleepless night and her heart's weariful eagerness to be near me, she sat by my chair, holding my hand, and sometimes looking into my eyes to find the life reflecting hers as in a sunken well that has once been a spring. My books and poor bachelor comforts caught her attention betweenwhiles. We talked of the day of storm by the lake; we read the unsigned letter. With her hand in mine I slept some minutes, and awoke grasping it, doubting and terrified, so great a wave of life lifted me up.

'No! you are not gone,' I sighed.

'Only come,' said she.

The nature of the step she had taken began to dawn on me.

'But when they miss you at the palace? Prince Ernest?'

'Hush! they have missed me already. It is done.' She said it smiling.

'Ottilia, will he take you away?'

'Us, dear, us.'

'Can you meet his anger?'

'Our aunt will be the executioner. We have a day of sweet hours before she can arrive.'

'May I see her first?'

'We will both see her as we are now.'

'We must have prompt answers for the margravine.'

'None, Harry. I do not defend myself ever.'

Distant hills, and folds of receding clouds and skies beyond them, were visible from my window, and beyond the skies I felt her soul.

'Ottilia, you were going to Italy?'

'Yes: or whither they please, for as long as they please.

I wished once to go, I have told you why. One of the series ' (she touched the letter lying on a reading-table beside her) ' turned the channel of all wishes and intentions. My friends left me to fall at the mercy of this one. I consented to the injunction that I should neither write nor receive letters. Do I argue ill in saying that a trust was implied ? Surely it was a breach of the trust to keep me ignorant of the danger of him I love ! Now they know it. I dared not consult them—not my dear father !—about any design of mine when I had read this odd copy-book writing, all in brief sentences, each beginning " he " and " he." It struck me like thrusts of a sword ; it illuminated me like lightning. That " he " was the heart within my heart. The writer must be some clever woman or simple friend, who feels for us very strongly. My lover assassinated, where could I be but with him ? '

Her little Ann coming in with chocolate and strips of fine white bread to dip in it stopped my efforts to explain the distinction between an assassination and a duel. I noticed then the likeness of Aennchen to Lieschen.

' She has a sister here,' said Ottilia ; ' and let her bring Lieschen to visit me here this afternoon.'

Aennchen, with a blush, murmured, that she heard and would obey. I had a memorable pleasure in watching my beloved eat and drink under my roof.

The duel remained incomprehensible to her. She first frightened me by remarking that duels were the pastime of brainless young men. Her next remark, in answer to my repeated attempts to shield my antagonist from a capital charge : ' But only military men and Frenchmen fight duels ! ' accompanied by a slightly investigating glance of timid surprise, gave me pain, together with a flashing apprehension of what she had forfeited, whom offended, to rush to the succour of a duellist. I had to repeat to her who my enemy was, so that there should

be no further mention of assassination. Prince Otto's name seemed to entangle her understanding completely.

'Otto! Otto!' she murmured; 'he has, I have heard, been obliged by some so-called laws of honour once or twice to—to—he is above suspicion of treachery! To my mind it is one and the same, but I would not harshly exclude the view the world puts on things; and I use the world's language in saying that he could not do a dishonourable deed. How far he honours himself is a question apart. That may be low enough, while the world is full of a man's praises.'

She knew the nature of a duel. 'It is the work of soulless creatures!' she broke through my stammered explanations with unwonted impatience, and pressing my hand: 'Ah! You are safe. I have you still. Do you know, Harry, I am not yet able to endure accidents and misadventures: I have not fortitude to meet them, or intelligence to account for them. They are little ironical laughter. Say we build so high: the lightning strikes us:—why build at all? The Summer fly is happier. If I had lost you! I can almost imagine that I should have asked for revenge. For why should the bravest and purest soul of my worship be snatched away? I am not talking wisdom, only my shaken self will speak just now! I pardon Otto, though he has behaved basely.'

'No, not basely,' I felt bound to plead on his behalf, thinking, in spite of a veritable anguish of gathering dread, that she had become enlightened and would soon take the common view of our case; 'not basely. He was excessively irritated, without cause in my opinion; he simply misunderstood certain matters. Dearest, you have nations fighting: a war is only an exaggerated form of duelling.'

'Nations at war are wild beasts,' she replied. 'The passions of these hordes of men are not an example for a

living soul. Our souls grow up to the light: we must keep eye on the light, and look no lower. Nations appear to me to have no worse than a soiled mirror of themselves in mobs. They are still uncivilized: they still bear a resemblance to the old monsters of the mud. Do you not see their claws and fangs, Harry? Do you find an apology in their acts for intemperate conduct? Men who fight duels appear in my sight no nobler than the first desperate creatures spelling the cruel A B C of the passions.'

'No, nor in mine,' I assented hastily. 'We are not perfect. But hear me. Yes, the passions are cruel. Circumstances however——I mean, there are social usages ——Ay, if one were always looking up! But should we not be gentle with our comparisons if we would have our views in proportion?'

She hung studiously silent, and I pursued:

'I trust you so much as my helper and my friend that I tell you what we do not usually tell to women—the facts, and the names connected with them. Sooner or later you would have learnt everything. Beloved, I do not wait to let you hear it by degrees, to be reconciled to it piecemeal.'

'And I forgive him,' she sighed. 'I scarcely bring myself to believe that Harry has bled from Otto's hand.'

'It was the accident of the case, Ottilia. We had to meet.'

'To meet?'

'There are circumstances when men will not accept apologies; they——we——heaven knows, I was ready to do all that a man could do to avoid this folly—wickedness; give it the worst of titles!'

'It did not occur——accidentally?' she inquired. Her voice sounded strange, half withheld in the utterance.

'It occurred,' said I, feeling my strength ebb and

despair set in, ‘ it occurred—the prince compelled me to meet him.’

‘ But my cousin Otto is no assassin ? ’

‘ Compelled, I say : that is, he conceived I had injured him, and left me no other way of making amends.’

Her defence of Otto was in reality the vehement cherishing of her idea of me. This caused her bewilderment, and like a barrier to the flowing of her mind it resisted and resisted. She could not suffer herself to realize that I was one of the brainless young savages, creatures with claws and fangs.

Her face was unchanged to me. The homeliness of her large mild eyes embraced me unshadowed, and took me to its inner fire unreservedly. Leaning in my roomy chair, I contemplated her at leisure while my heart kept saying ‘ Mine ! mine ! ’ to awaken an active belief in its possession. Her face was like the quiet morning of a winter day when cloud and sun intermix and make an ardent silver, with lights of blue and faint fresh rose ; and over them the beautiful fold of her full eyebrow on the eyelid like a bending upper heaven. Those winter mornings are divine. They move on noiselessly. The earth is still, as if awaiting. A wren warbles, and flits through the lank drenched brambles ; hill-side opens green ; elsewhere is mist, everywhere expectancy. They bear the veiled sun like a sangreal aloft to the wavy marble flooring of stainless cloud.

She was as fair. Gazing across her shoulder’s gentle depression, I could have desired to have the couchant brow, and round cheek, and rounding chin no more than a young man’s dream of woman, a picture alive, without the animating individual awful mind to judge of me by my acts. I chafed at the thought that one so young and lovely should meditate on human affairs at all. She was of an age to be maidenly romantic : our situation favoured

it. But she turned to me, and I was glad of the eyes I knew. She kissed me on the forehead.

'Sleep,' she whispered.

I feigned sleep to catch my happiness about me.

Some disenchanting thunder was coming, I was sure, and I was right. My father entered.

'Princess!' He did amazed and delighted homage, and forthwith uncontrollably poured out the history of my heroism, a hundred words for one;—my promptitude in picking the prince's glove up on my sword's point, my fine play with the steel, my scornful magnanimity, the admiration of my fellow-students;—every line of it; in stupendous language; an artillery celebration of victory. I tried to stop him. Ottilia rose, continually assenting, with short affirmatives, to his glorifying interrogations—a method he had of recapitulating the main points. She glanced to right and left, as if she felt caged.

'Is it known?' I heard her ask, in the half audible strange voice which had previously made me tremble.

'Known? I certify to you, princess,'—the unhappy man spouted his withering fountain of interjections over us anew; known in every Court and garrison of Germany! Known by this time in Old England! And, what was more, the correct version of it was known! It was known that the young Englishman had vanquished his adversary with the small sword, and had allowed him, because he had raged demoniacally on account of his lamed limb, to have a shot in revenge.

'The honour done me by the princess in visiting me is not to be known,' I summoned energy enough to say.

She shook her head.

My father pledged himself to the hottest secresy, equivalent to a calm denial of the fact, if necessary.

'Pray be at no trouble,' she addressed him.

The 'Where am I?' look was painful in her aspect.

It led me to perceive the difference of her published position in visiting a duellist lover instead of one assassinated. In the latter case, the rashness of an hereditary virgin princess avowing her attachment might pass condoned or cloaked by general compassion. How stood it in the former ? I had dragged her down to the duellist's level ! And as she was not of a nature to practise concealments, and scorned to sanction them, she was condemned, seeing that concealment as far as possible was imperative, to suffer bitterly in her own esteem. This, the cruellest, was the least of the evils. To keep our names disjoined was hopeless. My weakened frame and mental misery coined tears when thoughts were needed.

Presently I found the room empty of our poor unconscious tormentor. Ottilia had fastened her hand to mine again.

'Be generous,' I surprised her by saying. 'Go back at once. I have seen you ! Let my father escort you on the road. You will meet the margravine, or some one. I think, with you, it will be the margravine, and my father puts her in good humour. Pardon a wretched little scheme to save you from annoyance ! So thus you return within a day, and the margravine shelters you. Your name will not be spoken. But go at once, for the sake of Prince Ernest. I have hurt him already ; help me to avoid doing him a mortal injury. It was Schwartz who drove you ? our old Schwartz ! Old Warhead ! You see, we may be safe ; only every fresh minute adds to the danger. And another reason for going—another——'

'Ah ! ' she breathed, 'my Harry will talk himself into a fever.'

'I shall have it if the margravine comes here.'

'She shall not be admitted.'

'Or if I hear her, or hear that she has come ! Consent at once, and revive me. Oh ! I am begging you to leave

me, and wishing it with all my soul. Think over what I have done. Do not write to me. I shall see the compulsion of mere kindness between the lines. You consent. Your wisdom I never doubt—I doubt my own.'

'When it is yours you would persuade me to confide in?' said she, with some sorrowful archness.

Wits clear as hers could see that I had advised well, except in proposing my father for escort. It was evidently better that she should go as she came.

I refrained from asking her what she thought of me now. Suing for immediate pardon would have been like the applying of a lancet to a vein for blood: it would have burst forth, meaning mere words coloured by commiseration, kindness, desperate affection, anything but her soul's survey of herself and me; and though I yearned for the comfort passion could give me, I knew the mind I was dealing with, or, rather, I knew I was dealing with a mind; and I kept my tongue silent. The talk between us was of the possible date of my recovery, the hour of her return to the palace, the writer of the unsigned letters, books we had read apart or peeped into together. She was a little quicker in speech, less meditative. My sensitive watchfulness caught no other indication of a change.

My father drove away an hour in advance of the princess to encounter the margravine.

'By,' said he, rehearsing his exclamation of astonishment and delight at meeting her, 'by the most miraculous piece of good fortune conceivable, dear madam. And now comes the question, since you have condescended to notice a solitary atom of your acquaintance on the public highroad, whether I am to have the honour of doubling the freight of your carriage, or you will deign to embark in mine? But the direction of the horses' heads must be reversed, absolutely it must, if your

Highness would repose in a bed to-night. Good. So. And now, at a conversational trot, we may happen to be overtaken by acquaintances.'

I had no doubt of his drawing on his rarely-abandoned seven-league boots of jargon, once so delicious to me, for the margravine's entertainment. His lack of discernment in treating the princess to it ruined my patience.

The sisters Aennchen and Lieschen presented themselves a few minutes before his departure. Lieschen dropped at her feet.

'My child,' said the princess, quite maternally, 'could you be quit of your service with the Mährlens for two weeks, think you, to do duty here?'

'The Professor grants her six hours out of the twenty-four already,' said I.

'To go where?' she asked, alarmed.

'To come here.'

'Here? She knows you? She did not curtsey to you.'

'Nurses do not usually do that.'

The appearance of both girls was pitiable; but having no suspicion of the cause for it, I superadded,—

'She was here this morning.'

'Ah! we owe her more than we were aware of.'

The princess looked on her kindly, though with suspense in the expression.

'She told me of my approaching visitor,' I said.

'Oh! not told!' Lieschen burst out.

'Did you,'—the princess questioned her, and murmured to me, 'These children cannot speak falsehoods,'—they shone miserably under the burden of uprightness—'did you make sure that I should come?'

Lieschen thought—she supposed. But why? Why did she think and suppose? What made her anticipate the princess's arrival? This inveterate why communicated

its terrors to Aennchen, upon whom the princess turned scrutinizing eyes, saying,—'You write of me to your sister?'

'Yes, princess.'

'And she to you?'

Lieschen answered: 'Forgive me, your Highness, dearest lady!'

'You offered yourself here unasked?'

'Yes, princess.'

'Have you written to others besides your sister?'

'Seldom, princess; I do not remember.'

'You know the obligation of signatures to letters?'

'Ah!'

'You have been remiss in not writing to me, child.'

'Oh, princess! I did not dare to.'

'You have not written to me?'

'Ah! princess, how dared I?'

'Are you speaking truthfully?'

The unhappy girls stood trembling. Ottilia spared them the leap into the gulfs of confession. Her intuitive glance, assisted by a combination of minor facts, had read the story of their misdeeds in a minute. She sent them down to the carriage, suffering her culprits to kiss her fingers, while she said to one: 'This might be a fable of a pair of mice.'

When she was gone, after many fits of musing, the signification of it was revealed to my slower brain. I felt that it could not but be an additional shock to the regal pride of such a woman that these little maidens should have been permitted to act forcibly on her destiny. The mystery of the letters was easily explained as soon as a direct suspicion fell on one of the girls who lived in my neighbourhood and the other who was near the princess's person. Doubtless the revelation of their effective mouse plot had its humiliating bitterness for her on a day of

heavy oppression, smile at it as she subsequently might. The torture of heart with which I twisted the meaning of her words about the pair of mice to imply that the pair had conspired to make a net for an eagle and had enmeshed her, may have struck a vein of the truth. I could see no other antithesis to the laudable performance of the single mouse of fable. Lieschen, when she next appeared in the character of nurse, met my inquiries by supplicating me to imitate her sister's generous mistress, and be merciful.

She remarked by-and-by, of her own accord : ' Princess Ottilia does not regret that she had us educated.'

A tender warmth crept round me in thinking that a mind thus lofty would surely be, however severe in its insight, above regrets and recantations.

CHAPTER XXXIV

I GAIN A PERCEPTION OF PRINCELY STATE

I HAD a visit from Prince Ernest, nominally one of congratulation on my escape. I was never in my life so much at any man's mercy : he might have fevered me to death with reproaches, and I expected them on hearing his name pronounced at the door. I had forgotten the ways of the world. For some minutes I listened guardedly to his affable talk. My thanks for the honour done me were awkward, as if they came upon reflection. The prince was particularly civil and cheerful. His relative, he said, had written of me in high terms—the very highest, declaring that I was blameless in the matter, and that, though he had sent the horse back to my stables, he fully believed in the fine qualities of the animal, and

acknowledged his fault in making it a cause of provocation. To all of which I assented with easy nods.

'Your Shakespeare, I think,' said the prince, 'has a scene of young Frenchmen praising their horses. I myself am no stranger to the enthusiasm: one could not stake life and honour on a nobler brute. Pardon me if I state my opinion that you young Englishmen of to-day are sometimes rather overbearing in your assumption of a superior knowledge of horseflesh. We Germans in the Baltic provinces and in the Austrian cavalry think we have a right to a remark or two; and if we have not suborned the testimony of modern history, the value of our Hanoverian troopers is not unknown to one at least of your Generals. However, the odds are that you were right and Otto wrong, and he certainly put himself in the wrong to defend his ground.'

I begged him to pass a lenient sentence upon fiery youth. He assured me that he remembered his own. Our interchange of courtesies was cordially commonplace: we walked, as it were, arm-in-arm on thin ice, rivalling one another's gentlemanly composure. Satisfied with my discretion, the prince invited me to the lake-palace, and then a week's shooting in Styria to recruit. I thanked him in as clear a voice as I could command: 'Your Highness, the mine flourishes, I trust?'

'It does; I think I may say it does,' he replied. 'There is always the want of capital. What can be accomplished, in the present state of affairs, your father performs, on the whole, well. You smile—but I mean extraordinarily well. He has, with an accountant at his elbow, really the genius of management. He serves me busily, and, I repeat, well. A better employment for him than the direction of Court theatricals?'

'Undoubtedly it is.'

'Or than bestriding a bronze horse, personifying my

good ancestor! Are you acquainted with the Chancellor von Redwitz?'

'All I know of him, sir, is that he is fortunate to enjoy the particular confidence of his master.'

'He has a long head. But, now, *he* is a disappointing man in action; responsibility overturns him. He is the reverse of Roy, whose advice I do not take, though I 'm glad to set him running. Von Redwitz is in the town. He shall call on you, and amuse an hour or so of your convalescence.'

I confessed that I began to feel longings for society.

Prince Ernest was kind enough to quit me without unmasking. I had not to learn that the simplest visits and observations of ruling princes signify more than lies on the surface. Interests so highly personal as theirs demand from them a decent insincerity.

Chancellor von Redwitz called on me, and amused me with secret anecdotes of all the royal Houses of Germany, amusing chiefly through the veneration he still entertained for them. The grave senior was doing his utmost to divert one of my years. The immoralities of blue blood, like the amours of the Gods, were to his mind tolerable, if not beneficial to mankind, and he presumed I should find them toothsome. Nay, he besought me to coincide in his excuses of a widely charming young archduchess, for whom no estimable husband of a fitting rank could anywhere be discovered, so she had to be bestowed upon an archducal imbecile; and hence—and hence——Oh, certainly! Generous youth and benevolent age joined hands of exoneration over her. The princess of Satteberg actually married, under covert, a colonel of Uhlans at the age of seventeen; the marriage was quashed, the colonel vanished, the princess became the scandalous Duchess of Ilm-Ilm, and was surprised one infamous night in the outer court of the castle by a soldier on guard,

who dragged her into the guard-room and unveiled her there, and would have been summarily shot for his pains but for the locket on his breast, which proved him to be his sovereign's son.—A perfect romance, Mr. Chancellor. We will say the soldier son loved a delicate young countess in attendance on the duchess. The countess spies the locket, takes it to the duchess, is reprimanded, when behold! the locket opens, and Colonel von Bein appears as in his blooming youth, in Lancer uniform.—Young sir, your piece of romance has exaggerated history to caricature. Romances are the destruction of human interest. The moment you begin to move the individuals, they are puppets. 'Nothing but poetry, and I say it who do not read it'—(Chancellor von Redwitz is the speaker)—'nothing but poetry makes romances passable: for poetry is the everlastingly and embracingly human. Without it your fictions are flat foolishness, non-nourishing substance—a species of brandy and gruel!—diet for craving stomachs that can support nothing solider, and must have the weak stuff stiffened. Talking of poetry, there was an independent hereditary princess of Leiterstein in love with a poet!—a Leonora d'Este!—This was no Tasso. Nevertheless, she proposed to come to nuptials. *Good*, you observe? I confine myself to the relation of historical circumstances; in other words, facts; and of good or bad I know not.'

Chancellor von Redwitz smoothed the black silk stocking of his crossed leg, and set his bunch of seals and watch-key swinging. He resumed, entirely to amuse me,—

'The Princess Elizabeth of Leiterstein promised all the qualities which the most solicitous of paternal princes could desire as a guarantee for the judicious government of the territory to be bequeathed to her at his demise. But, as there is no romance to be extracted from her story,

I may as well tell you at once that she did not espouse the poet.'

'On the contrary, dear Mr. Chancellor, I am interested in the princess. Proceed, and be as minute as you please.'

'It is but a commonplace excerpt of secret historical narrative buried among the archives of the Family, my good Mr. Richmond. The Princess Elizabeth thoughtlessly pledged her hand to the young sonneteer. Of course, she could not fulfil her engagement.'

'Why not?'

'You see, you are impatient for romance, young gentleman.'

'Not at all, Mr. Chancellor. I do but ask a question.'

'You fence. Your question was dictated by impatience.'

'Yes, for the facts and elucidations.'

'For the romance, that is. You wish me to depict emotions.'

Hereupon this destroyer of temper embrowned his nostrils with snuff, adding,—'I am unable to.'

'Then one is not to learn why the princess could not fulfil her engagement?'

'Judged from the point of view of the pretender to the supreme honour of the splendid alliance, the fault was none of hers. She overlooked his humble, his peculiarly dubious, birth.'

'Her father interposed?'

'No.'

'The Family?'

'Quite inefficacious to arrest her determinations.'

'What then—what was in her way?'

'Germany.'

'What?'

'Great Germany, young gentleman. I should have

premised that, besides mental, she had eminent moral dispositions,—I might term it the conscience of her illustrious rank. She would have raised the poet to equal rank beside her had she possessed the power. She could and did defy the Family, and subdue her worshipping father, the most noble prince, to a form of paralysis of acquiescence—if I make myself understood. But she was unsuccessful in her application for the sanction of the Diet.'

'The Diet?'

'The German Diet. Have you not lived among us long enough to know that the German Diet is the seat of domestic legislation for the princely Houses of Germany? A prince or a princess may say, "I will this or that." The Diet says, "Thou shalt not"; pre-eminently, "Thou shalt not mix thy blood with that of an impure race, nor with blood of inferiors." Hence, we have it what we see it, a translucent flood down from the topmost founts of time. So we revere it. "Quâ man and woman," the Diet says, by implication, "do as you like, marry in the ditches, spawn plentifully. Quâ prince and princess, No! Your nuptials are nought. Or would you maintain them a legal ceremony, and be bound by them, you descend, you go forth; you are no reigning sovereign, you are a private person." His Serene Highness the prince was thus prohibited from affording help to his daughter. The princess was reduced to the decision either that she, the sole child born of him in legal wedlock, would render him quâ prince childless, or that she would —in short, would have her woman's way. The sovereignty of Leiterstein continued uninterruptedly with the elder branch. She was a true princess.'

'A true woman,' said I, thinking the sneer weighty.

The Chancellor begged me to recollect that he had warned me there was no romance to be expected.

I bowed; and bowed during the remainder of the interview.

Chancellor von Redwitz had performed his mission. The hours of my convalescence were furnished with food for amusement sufficient to sustain a year's blockade; I had no further longing for society, but I craved for fresh air intensely.

Did Ottilia know that this iron law, enforced with the might of a whole empire, environed her, held her fast from any motion of heart and will? I could not get to mind that the prince had hinted at the existence of such a law. Yet why should he have done so? The word impossible, in which he had not been sparing when he deigned to speak distinctly, comprised everything. More profitable than shooting empty questions at the sky was the speculation on his project in receiving me at the palace, and that was dark. My father, who might now have helped me, was off on duty again.

I found myself driving into Sarkeld with a sense of a whirlwind round my head; wheels in multitudes were spinning inside, striking sparks for thoughts. I met an orderly in hussar uniform of blue and silver, trotting on his errand. There he was; and whether many were behind him or he stood for the army in its might, he wore the trappings of an old princely House that nestled proudly in the bosom of its great jealous Fatherland. Previously in Sarkeld I had noticed members of the diminutive army to smile down on them. I saw the princely arms and colours on various houses and in the windows of shops. Emblems of a small State, they belonged to the history of the Empire. The Court-physician passed with a bit of ribbon in his buttonhole. A lady driving in an open carriage encouraged me to salute her. She was the wife of the Prince's Minister of Justice. Upon what foundation had I been building?

A reflection of the ideas possessing me showed Riversley, my undecorated home of rough red brick, in the middle of barren heaths. I entered the palace, I sent my respects to the prince. In return, the hour of dinner was ceremoniously named to me : ceremony damped the air. I had been insensible to it before, or so I thought, the weight was now so crushing. Arms, emblems, colours, liveries, portraits of princes and princesses of the House, of this the warrior, that the seductress, burst into sudden light. What had I to do among them ?

The presence of the living members of the Family was an extreme physical relief.

For the moment, beholding Ottilia, I counted her but as one of them. She welcomed me without restraint.

We chattered pleasantly at the dinner-table.

'Ah ! you missed our French troupe,' said the margravine.

'Yes,' said I, resigning them to her. She nodded :

'And one very pretty little woman they had, I can tell you—for a Frenchwoman.'

'You thought her pretty ? Frenchwomen know what to do with their brains and their pins, somebody has said.'

'And exceedingly well said, too. Where is that man Roy ? Good things always remind me of him.'

The question was addressed to no one in particular. The man happened to be my father, I remembered. A second allusion to him was answered by Prince Ernest :

'Roy is off to Croatia to enrol some dozens of cheap workmen. The strength of those Croats is prodigious, and well looked after they work. He will be back in three or four or more days.'

'You have spoilt a good man,' rejoined the margravine ; 'and that reminds me of a bad one—a cut-throat. Have you heard of that creature, the princess's

tutor ? Happily cut loose from us, though ! He has published a book—a horror ! all against Scripture and Divine right ! Is there any one to defend him now, I should like to ask ? '

'I,' said Ottilia.

'Gracious me ! you have not read the book ? '

'Right through, dear aunt, with all respect to you.'

'It 's in the house ? '

'It is in my study.'

'Then I don't wonder ! I don't wonder ! ' the margravine exclaimed.

'Best hear what the enemy has to say,' Prince Ernest observed.

'Excellently argued, papa, supposing that he be an enemy.'

'An enemy as much as the fox is the enemy of the poultry-yard, and the hound is the enemy of the fox ! ' said the margravine.

'I take your illustration, auntie,' said Ottilia. 'He is the enemy of chickens, and only does not run before the numbers who bark at him. My noble old Professor is a resolute truth-seeker : he raises a light to show you the ground you walk on. How is it that you, adoring heroes as you do, cannot admire him when he stands alone to support his view of the truth ! I would I were by him ! But I am, whenever I hear him abused.'

'I daresay you discard nothing that the wretch has taught you ! '

'Nothing ! nothing ! ' said Ottilia, and made my heart live.

The grim and taciturn Baroness Turckems, sitting opposite to her, sighed audibly.

'Has the princess been trying to convert you ? ' the margravine asked her.

'Trying ? no, madam. Reading ? yes.'

'My good Turckems! you do not get your share of sleep?'

'It is her Highness the princess who despises sleep.'

'See there the way with your free-thinkers! They commence by treading under foot the pleasantest half of life, and then they impose their bad habits on their victims. Ottilia! Ernest! I do insist upon having lights extinguished in the child's apartments by twelve o'clock at midnight.'

'Twelve o'clock is an extraordinary latitude for children,' said Ottilia, smiling.

The prince, with a scarce perceptible degree of emphasis, said,—

'Women born to rule must be held exempt from nursery restrictions.'

Here the conversation opened to let me in. More than once the margravine informed me that I was not the equal of my father.

'Why,' said she, 'why can't you undertake this detestable coal-mine, and let your father disport himself?'

I suggested that it might be because I was not his equal. She complimented me for inheriting a spark of Roy's brilliancy.

I fancied there was a conspiracy to force me back from my pretensions by subjecting me to the contemplation of my bare self and actual condition. Had there been, I should have suffered from less measured strokes. The unconcerted design to humiliate inferiors is commonly successfuller than conspiracy.

The prince invited me to smoke with him, and talked of our gradual subsidence in England to one broad level of rank through the intermixture by marriage of our aristocracy, squirearchy, and merchants.

'Here it is not so,' he said; 'and no democratic rageings will make it so. Rank, with us, is a principle. I

suppose you have not read the Professor's book ? It is powerful—he is a powerful man. It can do no damage to the minds of persons destined by birth to wield authority—none, therefore, to the princess. I would say to *you*—avoid it. For those who have to carve their way, it is bad. You will enter your Parliament, of course ? There you have a fine career.'

He asked me what I had made of Chancellor von Redwitz.

I perceived that Prince Ernest could be cool and sagacious in repairing what his imprudence or blindness had left to occur : that he must have enlightened his daughter as to her actual position, and was most dexterously and devilishly flattering her worldly good sense by letting it struggle and grow, instead of opposing her. His appreciation of her intellect was an idolatry ; he really confided in it, I knew ; and this reacted upon her. Did it ? My hesitations and doubts, my fantastic raptures and despair, my loss of the power to appreciate anything at its right value, revealed the madness of loving a princess.

There were preparations for the arrival of an important visitor. The margravine spoke of him emphatically. I thought it might be her farcically pompous way of announcing my father's return, and looked pleased, I suppose, for she added, ' Do you know Prince Hermann ? He spends most of his time in Eberhardstadt. He is cousin of the King, a wealthy branch ; tant soit peu philosophe, à ce qu'on dit ; a traveller. They say he has a South American complexion. I knew him a boy ; and his passion is to put together what Nature has unpieced, bones of fishes and animals. Il faut passer le temps. He adores the Deluge. Anything antediluvian excites him. He can tell us the " modes " of those days ; and, if I am not very much misinformed, he still expects us to

show him the very latest of these. Happily my milliner is back from Paris. Ay, and we have fossils in our neighbourhood, though, on my honour, I don't know where—somewhere; the princess can guide him, and you can help at the excavations. I am told he would go through the crust of earth for the backbone of an *idio—ilio*—something—saurus.'

I scrutinized Prince Hermann as rarely my observation had dwelt on any man. He had the German head, wide, so as seemingly to force out the ears; honest, ready, interested eyes in conversation; parched lips; a rather tropically-coloured skin; and decidedly the manners of a gentleman to all, excepting his retinue of secretaries, valets, and chasseurs—his 'blacks,' he called them. They liked him. One could not help liking him.

'You study much?' he addressed the princess at table.

She answered: 'I throw aside books, now you have come to open the earth and the sea.'

From that time the topics started on every occasion were theirs; the rest of us ran at their heels, giving tongue or not.

To me Prince Hermann was perfectly courteous. He had made English friends on his travels; he preferred English comrades in adventure to any other: thought our East Indian empire the most marvellous thing the world had seen, and our Indian Government cigars very smokeable upon acquaintance. When stirred, he bubbled with anecdote. 'Not been there,' was his reply to the margravine's tentatives for gossip of this and that of the German Courts. His museum, hunting, and the Opera absorbed and divided his hours. I guessed his age to be mounting forty. He seemed robust; he ate vigorously. Drinking he conscientiously performed as an accompanying duty, and was flushed after dinner,

burning for tobacco and a couch for his length. Then he talked of the littleness of Europe and the greatness of Germany ; logical postulates fell in collapse before him. America to America, North and South ; India to Europe. India was for the land with the largest sea-board. Mistress of the Baltic, of the North Sea and the East, as eventually she must be, Germany would claim to take India as a matter of course, and find an outlet for the energies of the most prolific and the toughest of the races of mankind,—the purest, in fact, the only true race, properly so called, out of India, to which it would return as to its source, and there create an empire magnificent in force and solidity, the actual wedding of East and West ; an empire firm on the ground and in the blood of the people, instead of an empire of aliens, that would bear comparison to a finely fretted cotton-hung palanquin balanced on an elephant's back, all depending on the docility of the elephant (his description of Great Britain's Indian Empire). 'And mind me,' he said, 'the masses of India are in character elephant all over, tail to proboscis ! servile till they trample you, and not so stupid as they look. But you 've done wonders in India, and we can't forget it. Your administration of Justice is worth all your battles there.'

This was the man : a milder one after the evaporation of his wine in speech, and peculiarly moderate on his return, exhaling sandal-wood, to the society of the ladies.

Ottilia danced with Prince Hermann at the grand Ball given in honour of him. The wives and daughters of the notables present kept up a buzz of comment on his personal advantages, in which, I heard it said, you saw his German heart, though he *had* spent the best years of his life abroad. Much court was paid to him by the men. Sarkeld visibly expressed satisfaction. One remark, 'We shall have his museum in the town ! ' left me no

doubt upon the presumed object of his visit: it was uttered and responded to with a depth of sentiment that showed how lively would be the general gratitude toward one who should exhilarate the place by introducing cases of fish-bones.

So little did he think of my presence, that returning from a ride one day, he seized and detained the princess's hand. She frowned with pained surprise, but unresistingly, as became a young gentlewoman's dignity. Her hand was rudely caught and kept in the manner of a boisterous wooer—a Harry the Fifth or lusty Petruchio. She pushed her horse on at a bound. Prince Hermann rode up head to head with her gallantly, having now both hands free of the reins, like an Indian spearing the buffalo: —it was buffalo courtship; and his shout of rallying astonishment at her resistance, 'What? What?' rang wildly to heighten the scene, she leaning constrained on one side and he bending half his body's length; a strange scene for me to witness.

They proceeded with old Schwartz at their heels dog-like. It became a question for me whether I should follow in the bitter track, and further the question whether I could let them escape from sight. They wound up the roadway, two figures and one following, now dots against the sky, now a single movement in the valley, now concealed, buried under billows of forest, making the low noising of the leaves an intolerable whisper of secresy, and forward I rushed again to see them rounding a belt of firs or shadowed by rocks, solitary on shorn fields, once more dipping to the forest, and once more emerging, vanishing. When I had grown sure of their reappearance from some point of view or other, I spied for them in vain. My destiny, whatever it might be, fluttered over them; to see them seemed near the knowing of it, and not to see them, deadly. I galloped, so intent on the three in

the distance, that I did not observe a horseman face toward me, on the road : it was Prince Hermann. He raised his hat ; I stopped short, and he spoke :—

'Mr. Richmond, permit me to apologize to you. I have to congratulate you, it appears. I was not aware.—— However, the princess has done me the favour to enlighten me. How you will manage, I can't guess, but that is not my affair. I am a man of honour ; and, *on* my honour, I conceived that I was invited here to decide, as my habit is, on the spot, if I would, or if I would not. I speak clearly to you, no doubt. There could be no hesitation in the mind of a man of sense. My way is prompt and blunt ; I am sorry I gave you occasion to reflect on it. There ! I have been deceived—deceived myself, let 's say. Sharp methods play the devil with you now and then. To speak the truth,—perhaps you won't care to listen to it,—family arrangements are the best ; take my word for it, they are the best. And in the case of princesses of the Blood !——Why, look you, *I* happen to be suitable. It 's a matter of chance, like your height, complexion, constitution. One is just what one is born to be, eh ? You have your English notions, I my German ; but as a man of the world in the bargain, and "gentleman," I hope, I should say, that to take a young princess's fancy, and drag her from her station is not—— of course, you know that the actual value of the title goes if she steps down ? Very well. But enough said ; I thought I was in a clear field. We are used to having our way cleared for us, *nous autres*. I will not detain you.'

We saluted gravely, and I rode on at a mechanical pace, discerning by glimpses the purport of what I had heard, without drawing warmth from it. The man's outrageously royal way of wooing, in contempt of minor presences and flimsy sentiment, made me jealous of him, notwithstanding his overthrow.

I was in the mood to fall entirely into my father's hands, as I did by unbosoming myself to him for the first time since my heart had been under the charm. Fresh from a rapid course of travel, and with the sense of laying the prince under weighty obligations, he made light of my perplexity, and at once delivered himself bluntly : 'She plights her hand to you in the presence of our good Peterborough.' His plans were shaped on the spot. 'We start for England the day after to-morrow to urge on the suit, Richie. Our Peterborough is up at the château. The Frau Feldmarschall honours him with a farewell invitation : you have a private interview with the princess at midnight in the library, where you are accustomed to read, as a student of books should, my boy : at a touch of the bell, or mere opening of the door, I see that Peterborough comes to you. It will not be a ceremony, but a binding of you both by your word of honour before a ghostly gentleman.' He informed me that his foresight had enlisted and detained Peterborough for this particular moment and identical piece of duty, which seemed possible, and in a singular manner incited me to make use of Peterborough. For the princess still denied me the look of love's intelligence, she avoided me, she still kept to the riddle, and my delicacy went so far that I was restrained from writing. I agreed with my father that we could not remain in Germany ; but how could I quit the field and fly to England on such terms ? I composed the flattest letter ever written, requesting the princess to meet me about midnight in the library, that I might have the satisfaction of taking my leave of her ; and this done, my spirits rose, and it struck me my father was practically wise, and I looked on Peterborough as an almost supernatural being. If Ottilia refused to come, at least I should know my fate. Was I not bound in manly honour to be to some degree adventurous ?

So I reasoned in exclamations, being, to tell truth, tired of seeming to be what I was not quite, of striving to become what I must have divined that I never could quite attain to. So my worthier, or ideal, self fell away from me. I was no longer devoted to be worthy of a woman's love, but consenting to the plot to entrap a princess. I was somewhat influenced, too, by the consideration, which I regarded as a glimpse of practical wisdom, that Prince Ernest was guilty of cynical astuteness in retaining me as his guest under manifold disadvantages. Personal pride stood up in arms, and my father's exuberant spirits fanned it. He dwelt loudly on his services to the prince, and his own importance and my heirship to mighty riches. He made me almost believe that Prince Ernest hesitated about rejecting me ; nor did it appear altogether foolish to think so, or why was I at the palace ? I had no head for reflections.

My father diverted me by levelling the whole battery of his comic mind upon Peterborough, who had a heap of manuscript, directed against heretical German theologians, to pack up for publication in his more congenial country :—how different, he ejaculated, from this nest —this forest of heresy, where pamphlets and critical essays were issued without let or hindrance, and, as far as he could see, no general reprobation of the Press, such as would most undoubtedly, with one voice, hail *any* strange opinions in our happy land at home ! Whether he really understood the function my father prepared him for, I cannot say. The invitation to dine and pass a night at the lake-palace flattered him immensely.

We went up to the château to fetch him.

A look of woe was on Peterborough's countenance when we descended at the palace portals : he had forgotten his pipe.

' You shall smoke one of the prince's,' my father said.

Peterborough remarked to me,—'We shall have many things to talk over in England.'

'No tobacco allowed on the premises at Riversley, I 'm afraid,' said I.

He sighed, and bade me jocosely to know that he regarded tobacco as just one of the consolations of exiles and bachelors.

'Peterborough, my good friend, you are a hero!' cried my father. 'He divorces tobacco to marry!'

'Permit me,' Peterborough interposed, with an ingenuous pretension to subtle waggery, in itself very comical, —'permit me; no legitimate union has taken place between myself and tobacco!'

'He puts an end to the illegitimate union between himself and tobacco that he may marry according to form!' cried my father.

We entered the palace merrily, and presently Peterborough, who had worn a studious forehead in the midst of his consenting laughter, observed, 'Well, you know, there is more in that than appears on the surface.'

His sweet simpleton air of profundity convulsed me. I handed my father the letter addressed to the princess to entrust it to the charge of one of the domestics, thinking carelessly at the time that Ottilia now stood free to make appointments and receive communications, and moreover that I was too proud to condescend to subterfuge, except this minor one, in consideration for her, of making it appear that my father, and not I, was in communication with her. My fit of laughter clung. I dressed chuckling. The margravine was not slow to notice and comment on my hilarious readiness.

'Roy,' she said, 'you have given your son spirit. One sees he has your blood when you have been with him an hour.'

'The season has returned, if your Highness will let it be Spring,' said my father.

'Far fetched!—from the Lower Danube!' she ejaculated in mock scorn to excite his sprightliness, and they fell upon a duologue as good as wit for the occasion.

Prince Hermann had gone. His departure was mentioned with the ordinary commonplaces of regret. Ottilia was unembarrassed, both in speaking of him and looking at me. We had the Court physician and his wife at table, Chancellor von Redwitz and his daughter, and General Happenwyll, chief of the prince's contingent, a Prussian at heart, said to be a good officer on the strength of a military book of some sort that he had full leisure to compose. The Chancellor's daughter and Baroness Turckems enclosed me.

I was questioned by the baroness as to the cause of my father's unexpected return. 'He is generally opportune,' she remarked.

'He goes with me to England,' I said.

'Oh! he goes,' said she; and asked why we were honoured with the presence of Mr. Peterborough that evening. There had always been a smouldering hostility between her and my father.

To my surprise, the baroness spoke of Ottilia by her name.

'Ottilia must have mountain air. These late hours destroy her complexion. Active exercise by day and proper fatigue by night time—that is my prescription.'

'The princess,' I replied, envying Peterborough, who was placed on one side of her, 'will benefit, I am sure, from mountain air. Does she read excessively? The sea——'

'The sea I pronounce bad for her—unwholesome,' returned the baroness. 'It is damp.'

I laughed.

'Damp,' she reiterated. 'The vapours, I am convinced, affect mind and body. That excursion in the yacht did her infinite mischief. The mountains restored her. They will again, take my word for it. Now take you my word for it, they will again. She is not too strong in constitution, but in order to prescribe accurately one must find out whether there is seated malady. To ride out in the night instead of reposing! To drive on and on, and not reappear till the night of the next day! I ask you, is it sensible? Does it not approach mania?'

'The princess—?' said I.

'Ottilia has done that.'

'Baroness, can I believe you?—and alone?'

A marvellous twinkle of shuffle appeared in the small slate-coloured eyes I looked at under their roofing of thick black eyebrows.

'Alone,' she said. 'That is, she was precautious to have her giant to protect her from violence. There you have a glimmering of reason in her; and all of it that I can see.'

'Old Schwartz is a very faithful servant,' said I, thinking that she resembled the old Warhead in visage.

'A dog's obedience to the master's whims you call faithfulness! Hem!' The baroness coughed dryly.

I whispered: 'Does Prince Ernest——is he aware?'

'*You* are aware,' retorted the baroness, 'that what a man idolizes he won't see flaw in. Remember, I am something here, or I am nothing.'

The enigmatical remark was received by me decorously as a piece of merited chastisement. Nodding with gravity, I expressed regrets that the sea did not please her, otherwise I could have offered her a yacht for a cruise. She nodded stiffly. Her mouth shut up a smile, showing more of the door than the ray. The dinner, virtually a German supper, ended in general conversation on political

affairs, preceded and supported by a discussion between the Prussian-hearted General and the Austrian-hearted margravine. Prince Ernest, true to his view that diplomacy was the weapon of minor sovereigns, held the balance, with now a foot in one scale, now in the other ; a politic proceeding, so long as the rival powers passively consent to be weighed.

We trifled with music, made our bow to the ladies, and changed garments for the smoking-room. Prince Ernest smoked his one cigar among guests. The General, the Chancellor, and the doctor, knew the signal for retirement, and rose simultaneously with the discharge of his cigar-end in sparks on the unlit logwood pile. My father and Mr. Peterborough kept their chairs.

There was, I felt with relief, no plot, for nothing had been definitely assented to by me. I received Prince Ernest's proffer of his hand, on making my adieux to him, with a passably clear conscience.

I went out to the library. A man came in for orders ; I had none to give. He saw that the shutters were fixed and the curtains down, examined my hand-lamp, and placed lamps on the reading-desk and mantel-piece. Bronze busts of sages became my solitary companions. The room was long, low and dusky, voluminously and richly hung with draperies at the farther end, where a table stood for the prince to jot down memoranda, and a sofa to incline him to the relaxation of romance-reading. A door at this end led to the sleeping apartments of the West wing of the palace. Where I sat the student had ranges of classical volumes in prospect and classic heads ; no other decoration to the walls. I paced to and fro and should have flung myself on the sofa but for a heap of books there covered from dust, perhaps concealed, that the yellow Parisian volumes, of which I caught sight of some new dozen, might not be an attraction to the eyes

of chance-comers. At the lake-palace the prince frequently gave audience here. He had said to me, when I stated my wish to read in the library, 'You keep to the classical department?' I thought it possible he might not like the coloured volumes to be inspected; I had no taste for a perusal of them. I picked up one that fell during my walk, and flung it back, and disturbed a heap under cover, for more fell, and there I let them lie.

Ottilia did not keep me waiting.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SCENE IN THE LAKE-PALACE LIBRARY

I was humming the burden of Göthe's Zigeunerlied, a favourite one with me whenever I had too much to think of, or nothing. A low rush of sound from the hall-doorway swung me on my heel, and I saw her standing with a silver lamp raised in her right hand to the level of her head, as if she expected to meet obscurity. A thin blue Indian scarf muffled her throat and shoulders. Her hair was loosely knotted. The lamp's full glow illumined and shadowed her. She was like a statue of Twilight.

I went up to her quickly, and closed the door, saying, 'You have come'; my voice was not much above a breath.

She looked distrustfully down the length of the room; 'You were speaking to some one?'

'No.'

'You were speaking.'

'To myself, then, I suppose.'

I remembered and repeated the gipsy burden.

She smiled faintly and said it was the hour for Anna and Ursel and Käth and Liese to be out.

Her hands were gloved, a small matter to tell of.

We heard the portico-sentinel challenged and relieved.

'Midnight,' I said.

She replied : 'You were not definite in your directions about the minutes.'

'I feared to name midnight.'

'Why ? '

'Lest the appointment of midnight—I lose my knowledge of you !—should make you reflect, frighten you. You see, I am inventing a reason ; I really cannot tell why, if it was not that I hoped to have just those few minutes more of you. And now they 're gone. I would not have asked you but that I thought you free to act.'

'I am.'

'And you come freely ? '

'A "therefore" belongs to every grant of freedom.'

'I understand : your judgement was against it.'

'Be comforted,' she said ; 'it is your right to bid me come, if you think fit.'

One of the sofa-volumes fell. She caught her breath ; and smiled at her foolish alarm.

I told her that it was my intention to start for England in the morning ; that this was the only moment I had, and would be the last interview : my rights, if I possessed any, and I was not aware that I did, I threw down.

'You throw down one end of the chain,' she said.

'In the name of heaven, then,' cried I, 'release yourself.'

She shook her head. 'That is not my meaning.'

Note the predicament of a lover who has a piece of dishonesty lurking in him. My chilled self-love had certainly the right to demand the explanation of her coldness, and I could very well guess that a word or two drawn

from the neighbourhood of the heart would fetch a warmer current to unlock the ice between us, but feeling the coldness I complained of to be probably a suspicion, I fixed on the suspicion as a new and deeper injury done to my loyal love for her, and armed against that I dared not take an initiative for fear of unexpectedly justifying it by betraying myself.

Yet, supposing her inclination to have become diverted, I was ready frankly to release her with one squeeze of hands, and take all the pain, and I said : 'Pray, do not speak of chains.'

'But they exist. Things cannot be undone for us two by words.'

The tremble as of a strung wire in the strenuous pitch of her voice seemed to say she was not cold, though her gloved hand resting its finger-ends on the table, her restrained attitude, her very calm eyes, declared the reverse. This and that sensation beset me in turn.

We shrank oddly from uttering one another's Christian name. I was the first with it ; my 'Ottilia !' brought soon after 'Harry' on her lips, and an atmosphere about us much less Arctic.

'Ottilia, you have told me you wish me to go to England.'

'I have.'

'We shall be friends.'

'Yes, Harry ; we cannot be quite divided ; we have that knowledge for our present happiness.'

'The happy knowledge that we may have our bone to gnaw when food 's denied. It is something. One would like possibly, after expulsion out of Eden, to climb the gates to see how the trees grow there. What I cannot imagine is the forecasting of any joy in the privilege.'

'By nature or system, then, you are more impatient than I, for I can,' said Ottilia. She added : 'So much

of your character I divined early. It was part of my reason for wishing you to work. You will find that hard work in England—but why should I preach to you! Harry, you have called me here for some purpose?'

'I must have detained you already too long.'

'Time is not the offender. Since I have come, the evil——'

'Evil? Are not your actions free?'

'Patience, my friend. The freer my actions, the more am I bound to deliberate on them. I have the habit of thinking that my deliberations are not in my sex's fashion of taking counsel of the nerves and the blood. In truth, Harry, I should not have come but for my acknowledgement of your right to bid me come.'

'You know, princess, that in honouring me with your attachment, you imperil your sovereign rank?'

'I do.'

'What next?'

'Except that it is grievously in peril, nothing!'

'Have you known it all along?'

'Dimly—scarcely. To some extent I knew it, but it did not stand out in broad daylight. I have been learning the world's wisdom recently. Would you have had me neglect it? Surely much is due to my father? My relatives have claims on me. Our princely Houses have. My country has.'

'Oh, princess, if you are pleading——'

'Can you think that I am?'

The splendour of her high nature burst on me with a shock.

I could have fallen to kiss her feet, and I said indifferently: 'Not pleading, only it is evident the claims—I hate myself for bringing you in antagonism with them. Yes, and I have been learning some worldly wisdom; I wish for your sake it had not been so late. What made

me overleap the proper estimate of your rank! I can't tell; but now that I know better the kind of creature—the man who won your esteem when you knew less of the world!'——

'Hush! I have an interest in him, and do not suffer him to be spurned,' Ottilia checked me. 'I, too, know him better, and still, if he is dragged down I am in the dust; if he is abused the shame is mine.' Her face bloomed.

Her sweet warmth of colour was transfused through my veins.

'We shall part in a few minutes. I have a mind to beg a gift of you.'

'Name it.'

'That glove.'

She made her hand bare and gave me, not the glove, but the hand.

'Ah! but this I cannot keep.'

'Will you have everything spoken?' she said, in a tone that would have been reproachful had not tenderness melted it. 'There should be a spirit between us, Harry, to spare the task. You do keep it, if you choose. I have some little dread of being taken for a madwoman, and more—an actual horror of behaving ungratefully to my generous father. He has proved that he can be indulgent, most trusting and considerate for his daughter, though he is a prince; my duty is to show him that I do not forget I am a princess. I owe my rank allegiance when he forgets his on my behalf, my friend! You are young. None but an inexperienced girl hoodwinked by her tricks of intuition, would have dreamed you superior to the passions of other men. I was blind; I am regretful—take my word as you do my hand—for no one's sake but my father's. You and I are bound fast; only, help me that the blow may be lighter for him; if I descend

from the place I was born to, let me tell him it is to occupy one I am fitted for, or should not at least feel my Family's deep blush in filling. To be in the midst of life in your foremost England is, in my imagination, very glorious. Harry, I remember picturing to myself when I reflected upon your country's history—perhaps a year after I had seen the two " young English gentlemen,"—that you touch the morning and evening star, and wear them in your coronet, and walk with the sun West and East! Child's imagery; but the impression does not wear off. If I rail at England, it is the anger of love. I fancy I have good and great things to speak to the people through you.'

There she stopped. The fervour she repressed in speech threw a glow over her face, like that on a frosty bare autumn sky after sunset.

I pressed my lips to her hand.

In our silence another of the fatal yellow volumes thumped the floor.

She looked into my eyes and asked,—

'Have we been speaking before a witness?'

So thoroughly had she renovated me, that I accused and reproved the lurking suspicion with a soft laugh.

'Beloved! I wish we had been.'

'If it might be,' she said, divining me and musing.

'Why not?'

She stared.

'How? What do you ask?'

The look on my face alarmed her. I was breathless and colourless, with the heart of a hawk eyeing his bird —a fox, would be the truer comparison, but the bird was noble, not one that cowered. Her beauty and courage lifted me into high air, in spite of myself, and it was a huge weight of greed that fell away from me when I said,—

'I would not urge it for an instant. Consider—if

you had just plighted your hand in mine before a witness ! '

' My hand is in yours ; my word to you is enough.'

' Enough. My thanks to heaven for it ! But consider —a pledge of fidelity that should be my secret angel about me in trouble and trial ; my wedded soul ! She cannot falter, she is mine for ever, she guides me, holds me to work, inspirits me !—she is secure from temptation, from threats, from everything—nothing can touch, nothing move her, she is mine ! I mean, an attested word, a form, that is—a betrothal. For me to say—my beloved and my betrothed ! You hear that ? Beloved ! is a lonely word :—betrothed ! carries us joined up to death. Would you ?—I do but ask to know that you would. To-morrow I am loose in the world, and there 's a darkness in the thought of it almost too terrible. Would you ?—one sworn word that gives me my bride, let men do what they may ! I go then singing to battle —sure !—Remember, it is but the question whether you would.'

' Harry, I would, and will,' she said, her lips shuddering—' wait '—for a cry of joy escaped me—' I will—look you me in the eyes and tell me you have a doubt of me.'

I looked : she swam in a mist.

We had our full draught of the divine self-oblivion which floated those ghosts of the two immortal lovers through the bounds of their purgatorial circle, and for us to whom the minutes were ages, as for them to whom all time was unmarked, the power of supreme love swept out circumstance. Such embraces cast the soul beyond happiness, into no known region of sadness, but we drew apart sadly, even as that involved pair of bleeding recollections looked on the life lost to them. I knew well

what a height she dropped from when the senses took fire. She raised me to learn how little of fretful thirst and its reputed voracity remains with love when it has been met midway in air by a winged mate able to sustain, unable to descend farther.

And it was before a witness, though unviewed by us.

The farewell had come. Her voice was humbled.

Never, I said, delighting in the now conscious bravery of her eyes engaging mine, shadowy with the struggle, I would never doubt her, and I renounced all pledges. To be clear in my own sight as well as in hers, I made mention of the half-formed conspiracy to obtain her plighted troth in a binding manner. It was not necessary for me to excuse myself; she did that, saying, 'Could there be a greater proof of my darling's unhappiness? I am to blame.'

We closed hands for parting. She hesitated and asked if my father was awake; then promptly to my answer: 'I will see him. I have treated you ill. I have exacted too much patience. The suspicion was owing to a warning I had this evening, Harry; a silly warning to beware of snares; and I had no fear of them, believe me, though for some moments, and without the slightest real desire to be guarded, I fancied Harry's father was overhearing me. He is your father, dearest: fetch him to me. My father will hear of this from my lips—why not he? Ah! did I suspect you ever so little? I will atone for it; not atone, I will make it my pleasure; it is my pride that has hurt you both. O my lover! my lover! Dear head, dear eyes! Delicate and noble that you are! my own stronger soul! Where was my heart? Is it sometimes dead, or sleeping? But you can touch it to life. Look at me—I am yours. I consent, I desire it; I will see him. I *will* be bound. The heavier the chains, oh! the better for me. What am I, to be proud of anything not

yours, Harry ? and I that have passed over to you ! I will see him at once.'

A third in the room cried out,—

' No, not that—you do not ! '

The tongue was German and struck on us like a roll of unfriendly musketry before we perceived the enemy. ' Princess Ottilia ! you remember your dignity or I defend you and it, think of me what you will ! '

Baroness Turckems, desperately entangled by the sofa-covering, rushed into the ray of the lamps and laid her hand on the bell-rope. In a minute we had an alarm sounding, my father was among us, there was a mad play of chatter, and we stood in the strangest nightmare-light that ever ended an interview of lovers.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOMEWARD AND HOME AGAIN

The room was in flames, Baroness Turckems plucking at the bell-rope, my father looking big and brilliant.

' Hold hand ! ' he shouted to the frenzied baroness.

She counter-shouted ; both of them stamped feet ; the portico sentinel struck the butt of his musket on the hall-doors ; bell answered bell along the upper galleries.

' Foolish woman, be silent ! ' cried my father.

' Incendiary ! ' she half-shrieked.

He turned to the princess, begging her to retire, but she stared at him, and I too, after having seen him deliberately apply the flame of her lamp to the curtains, deemed him mad. He was perfectly self-possessed, and said, ' This will explain the bell ! ' and fetched a deep breath, and again urged the princess to retire.

Peterborough was the only one present who bethought him of doing fireman's duty. The risk looked greater than it was. He had but to tear the lighted curtains down and trample on them. Suddenly the baroness called out, 'The man is right! Come with me, princess; escape, your Highness, escape! And you,' she addressed me—'*you* rang the bell, you!'

'To repair your error, baroness,' said my father.

'I have my conscience pure; have you?' she retorted.

He bowed and said, 'The fire will also excuse your presence on the spot, baroness.'

'I thank my God I am not so cool as you,' said she.

'Your warmth'—he bent to her—'shall always be your apology, baroness.'

Seeing the curtains extinguished, Ottilia withdrew. She gave me no glance.

All this occurred before the night-porter, who was going his rounds, could reach the library. Lacqueys and maids were soon at his heels. My father met Prince Ernest with a florid story of a reckless student, either asleep or too anxious to secure a particular volume, and showed his usual consideration by not asking me to verify the narrative. With that, and with high praise of Peterborough, as to whose gallantry I heard him deliver a very circumstantial account, he, I suppose, satisfied the prince's curiosity, and appeased him, the damage being small compared with the uproar. Prince Ernest questioned two or three times, 'What set him ringing so furiously?' My father made some reply.

Ottilia's cloud-pale windows were the sole greeting I had from her on my departure early next morning, far wretcheder than if I had encountered a misfortune. It was impossible for me to deny that my father had shielded the princess: she would never have run for a menace. As he remarked, the ringing of the bell would not of itself

have forced her to retreat, and the nature of the baroness's alarm demanded nothing less than a conflagration to account for it to the household. But I felt humiliated on Ottilia's behalf, and enraged on my own. And I had, I must confess, a touch of fear of a man who could unhesitatingly go to extremities, as he had done, by summoning fire to the rescue. He assured me that moments such as those inspired him and were the pride of his life, and he was convinced that, upon reflection, 'I should rise to his pitch.' He deluded himself with the idea of his having foiled Baroness Turckems, nor did I choose to contest it, though it struck me that she was too conclusively the foiler. She must have intercepted the letter for the princess. I remembered acting carelessly in handing it to my father for him to consign it to one of the domestics, and he passed it on with a flourish. Her place of concealment was singularly well selected under the sofa-cover, and the little heaps of paper-bound volumes. I do not fancy she meant to rouse the household; her notion probably was to terrorize the princess, that she might compel her to quit my presence. In rushing to the bell-rope, her impetuosity sent her stumbling on it with force, and while threatening to ring, and meaning merely to threaten, she rang; and as it was not a retractable act, she continued ringing, and the more violently upon my father's appearance. Catching sight of Peterborough at his heels, she screamed a word equivalent to a clergyman. She had lost her discretion, but not her wits.

For any one save a lover—thwarted as I was, and perturbed by the shadow falling on the princess—my father's àplomb and promptness in conjuring a check to what he assumed to be a premeditated piece of villany on the part of Baroness Turckems, might have seemed tolerably worthy of admiration. Me the whole scene affected as

if it had burnt my skin. I loathed that picture of him, constantly present to me, of his shivering the glass of Ottilia's semi-classical night-lamp, gravely asking her pardon, and stretching the flame to the curtain, with large eyes blazing on the baroness. The stupid burlesque majesty of it was unendurable to thought. Nevertheless, I had to thank him for shielding Ottilia, and I had to brood on the fact that I had drawn her into a situation requiring such a shield. He, meanwhile, according to his habit, was engaged in reviewing the triumphs to come. 'We have won a princess!' And what England would say, how England would look, when, on a further journey, I brought my princess home, entirely occupied his imagination, to my excessive torture—a state of mind for which it was impossible to ask his mercy. His sole link with the past appeared to be this notion that he had planned all the good things in store for us. Consequently I was condemned to hear of the success of the plot, until —for I had not the best of consciences—I felt my hand would be spell-bound in the attempt to write to the princess; and with that sense of incapacity I seemed to be cut loose from her, drifting back into the desolate days before I saw her wheeled in her invalid chair along the sands and my life knew sunrise.

But whatever the mood of our affections, so it is with us island wanderers: we cannot gaze over at England, knowing the old country to be close under the sea-line, and not hail it, and partly forget ourselves in the time that was. The smell of sea-air made me long for the white cliffs, the sight of the white cliffs revived pleasant thoughts of Riversley, and thoughts of Riversley thoughts of Janet, which were singularly and refreshingly free from self-accusations. Some love for my home, similar to what one may have for Winter, came across me, and some appreciation of Janet as well, in whose society I

was sure to be at least myself, a creature much reduced in altitude, but without the cramped sensations of a man on a monument. My hearty Janet! I thanked her then for seeing me of my natural height.

Some hours after parting with my father in London, I lay down to sleep in my old home, feeling as if I had thrown off a coat of armour. I awoke with a sailor's song on my lips. Looking out of window at the well-known features of the heaths and dark firs, and waning oak copses, and the shadowy line of the downs stretching their long whale backs South to West, it struck me that I had been barely alive of late. Indeed one who consents to live as I had done, in a hope and a retrospect, will find his life slipping between the two, like the ships under the striding Colossus. I shook myself, braced myself, and saluted every one at the breakfast table with the frankness of Harry Richmond. Congratulated on my splendid spirits, I was confirmed in the idea that I enjoyed them, though I knew of something hollow which sent an echo through me at intervals. Janet had become a fixed inmate of the house. 'I 've bought her, and I shall keep her; she 's the apple of my eye,' said the squire, adding with characteristic scrupulousness, 'if apple 's female.' I asked her whether she had heard from Temple latterly. 'No; dear little fellow!' cried she, and I saw in a twinkling what it was that the squire liked in her, and liked it too. I caught sight of myself, as through a rift of cloud, trotting home from the hunt to a glad, frank, unpretending mate, with just enough of understanding to look up to mine. For a second or so it was pleasing, as a glance out of his library across hill and dale will be to a strained student. Our familiarity sanctioned a comment on the growth of her daughter-of-the-regiment moustache, the faintest conceivable suggestion of a shadow on her soft upper lip, which a poet might

have feigned to have fallen from her dark thick eyebrows.

'Why, you don't mean to say, Hal, it 's not to your taste ? ' said the squire.

'No,' said I, turning an eye on my aunt Dorothy, 'I 've loved it all my life.'

The squire stared at me to make sure of this, muttered that it was to his mind a beauty, and that it was nothing more on Janet's lip than down on a flower, bloom on a plum. The poetical comparisons had the effect of causing me to examine her critically. She did not raise a spark of poetical sentiment in my bosom. She had grown a tall young woman, firmly built, light of motion, graceful perhaps ; but it was not the grace of grace : the grace of simplicity, rather. She talked vivaciously and frankly, and gave (to friends) her whole eyes and a fine animation in talking ; and her voice was a delight to friends ; there was always the full ring of Janet in it, and music also. She still lifted her lip when she expressed contempt or dislike of persons ; nor was she cured of her trick of frowning. She was as ready as ever to be flattered ; that was evident. My grandfather's praise of her she received with a rewarding look back of kindness ; she was not discomposed by flattery, and threw herself into no postures, nor blushed very deeply. 'Thank you for perceiving my merits,' she seemed to say ; and to be just I should add that one could fancy her saying, you see them because you love me. She wore her hair in a plain knot, peculiarly neatly rounded away from the temples, which sometimes gave to a face not aquiline a look of swiftness. The face was mobile, various, not at all suggestive of bad temper, in spite of her frowns. The profile of it was less assuring than the front, because of the dark eyebrows' extension and the occasional frown, but that was not shared by the mouth, which was, I

admitted to myself, a charming bow, running to a length at the corners like her eyebrows, quick with smiles. The corners of the mouth would often be in movement, setting dimples at work in her cheek, while the brows remained fixed, and thus at times a tender meditative air was given her that I could not think her own. Upon what could she possibly reflect? She had not a care, she had no education, she could hardly boast an idea—two at a time I was sure she never had entertained. The sort of wife for a fox-hunting lord, I summed up, and hoped he would be a good fellow.

Peterborough was plied by the squire for a description of German women. Blushing and shooting a timid look from under his pendulous eyelids at my aunt, indicating that he was prepared to go the way of tutors at Riversley, he said he really had not much observed them.

'They 're a whitey-brown sort of women, aren't they?' the squire questioned him, 'with tow hair and fish eyes, high o' the shoulder, bony, and a towel skin and gone teeth, so I 've heard tell. I 've heard that 's why the men have all taken to their beastly smoking.'

Peterborough ejaculated: 'Indeed! sir, really!' He assured my aunt that German ladies were most agreeable, cultivated persons, extremely domesticated, retiring; the encomiums of the Roman historian were as well deserved by them in the present day as they had been in the past; decidedly, on the whole, Peterborough would call them a virtuous race.

'Why do they let the men smoke, then?' said the squire. 'A pretty style o' courtship. Come, sit by my hearth, ma'am; *I* 'll be your chimney—faugh! dirty rascals!'

Janet said: 'I rather like the smell of cigars.'

'Like what you please, my dear—he 'll be a lucky dog,' the squire approved her promptly, and asked me if I smoked.

I was not a stranger to the act, I confessed.

'Well'—he took refuge in practical philosophy—'a man must bring some dirt home from every journey: only don't smoke me out, mercy's sake.'

Here was a hint of Janet's influence with him, and of what he expected from my return to Riversley.

Peterborough informed me that he suffered persecution over the last glasses of Port in the evening, through the squire's persistent inquiries as to whether a woman had anything to do with my staying so long abroad. 'A lady, sir?' quoth Peterborough. 'Lady, if you like,' rejoined the squire. 'You parsons and petticoats must always mince the meat to hash the fact.' Peterborough defended his young friend Harry's moral reputation, and was amazed to hear that the squire did not think highly of a man's chastity. The squire acutely chagrined the sensitive gentleman by drawling the word after him, and declaring that he tossed that kind of thing into the women's wash-basket. Peterborough, not without signs of indignation, protesting, the squire asked him point-blank if he supposed that Old England had been raised to the head of the world by such as he. In fine, he favoured Peterborough with a lesson in worldly views. 'But these,' Peterborough said to me, 'are not the views, dear Harry—if they are the views of ladies of any description, which I take leave to doubt—not the views of the ladies you and I would esteem. For instance, the ladies of this household.' My aunt Dorothy's fate was plain.

In reply to my grandfather's renewed demand to know whether any one of those High-Dutch women had got hold of me, Peterborough said: 'Mr. Beltham, the only

lady of whom it could be suspected that my friend Harry regarded her with more than ordinary admiration was Hereditary Princess of one of the ancient princely Houses of Germany.' My grandfather thereupon said, 'Oh!' pushed the wine, and was stopped.

Peterborough chuckled over this 'Oh!' and the stoppage of further questions, while acknowledging that the luxury of a pipe would help to make him more charitable. He enjoyed the Port of his native land, but he did, likewise, feel the want of one whiff or so of the less restrictive foreigner's pipe; and he begged me to note the curiosity of our worship of aristocracy and royalty; and we, who were such slaves to rank, and such tyrants in our own households,—we Britons were the great sticklers for freedom! His conclusion was, that we were not logical. We would have a Throne, which we would not allow the liberty to do anything to make it worthy of rational veneration: we would have a peerage, of which we were so jealous that it formed almost an assembly of automatons; we would have virtuous women, only for them to be pursued by immoral men. Peterborough feared, he must say, that we were an inconsequent people. His residence abroad had so far unhinged him; but a pipe would have stopped his complainings.

Moved, perhaps, by generous wine, in concert with his longing for tobacco, he dropped an observation of unwonted shrewdness; he said: 'The squire, my dear Harry, a most honourable and straightforward country gentleman, and one of our very wealthiest, is still, I would venture to suggest, an example of old blood that requires —I study race—varying, modifying, one might venture to say, correcting; and really, a friend with more privileges than I possess, would or should throw him a hint that no harm has been done to the family by an intermixture . . . old blood does occasionally need it—you know I study

blood—it becomes too coarse, or, in some cases, too fine The study of the mixture of blood is probably one of our great physical problems.'

Peterborough commended me to gratitude for the imaginative and chivalrous element bestowed on me by a father that was other than a country squire; one who could be tolerant of innocent habits, and not of guilty ones—a further glance at the interdicted pipe. I left him almost whimpering for it.

The contemplation of the curious littleness of the lives of men and women lived in this England of ours, made me feel as if I looked at them out of a palace balcony-window; for no one appeared to hope very much or to fear; people trotted in their different kinds of harness; and I was amused to think of my heart going regularly in imitation of those about me. I was in a princely state of mind indeed, not disinclined for a time to follow the general course of life, while despising it. An existence without colour, without anxious throbbing, without salient matter for thought, challenged contempt. But it was exceedingly funny. My aunt Dorothy, the squire, and Janet submitted to my transparent inward laughter at them, patiently waiting for me to share their contentment, in the deluded belief that the hour would come. The principal items of news embraced the death of Squire Gregory Bulsted, the marriage of this and that young lady, a legal contention between my grandfather and Lady Maria Higginson, the wife of a rich manufacturer newly located among us, on account of a right of encampment on Durstan heath, my grandfather taking side with the gipsies, and beating her ladyship—a friend of Heriot's, by the way. Concerning Heriot, my aunt Dorothy was in trouble. She could not, she said, approve his behaviour in coming to this neighbourhood at all, and she hinted that I might induce him to keep away. I

mentioned Julia Bulsted's being in mourning, merely to bring in her name tentatively.

'Ay, mourning 's her outer rig, never doubt,' said the squire. 'Flick your whip at her, she 's a charitable soul, Judy Bulsted! She knits stockings for the poor. She 'd down and kiss the stump of a sailor on a stick o' timber. All the same, she oughtn't to be alone. Pity she hasn't a baby. You and I 'll talk it over by-and-by, Harry.'

Kiomi was spoken of, and Lady Maria Higginson, and then Heriot.

'M—m—m—m rascal!' hummed the squire. 'There 's three, and that 's not enough for him. Six months back a man comes over from Surreywards, a farm he calls Dipwell, and asks after you, Harry; rigmaroles about a handsome lass gone off . . . some scoundrel! You and I 'll talk it over by-and-by, Harry.'

Janet raised and let fall her eyebrows. The fiction, that so much having been said, an immediate show of reserve on such topics preserved her in ignorance of them, was one she subscribed to merely to humour the squire. I was half in doubt whether I disliked or admired her want of decent hypocrisy. She allowed him to suppose that she did not hear, but spoke as a party to the conversation. My aunt Dorothy blamed Julia. The squire thundered at Heriot; Janet, liking both, contented herself with impartial comments.

'I always think in these cases that the women must be the fools,' she said. Her affectation was to assume a knowledge of the world and all things in it. We rode over to Julia's cottage, on the outskirts of the estate now devolved upon her husband. Irish eyes are certainly bewitching lights. I thought, for my part, I could not do as the captain was doing, serving his country in foreign parts, while such as these were shining without a captain at home. Janet approved his conduct, and was

right. 'What can a wife think the man worth who sits down to guard his house-door?' she answered my slight innuendo. She compared the man to a kennel-dog. 'This,' said I, 'comes of made-up matches,' whereat she was silent.

Julia took her own view of her position. She asked me whether it was not dismal for one who was called a grass widow, and was in reality a salt-water one, to keep fresh, with a lap-dog, a cook, and a maid-servant, and a postman that passed the gate twenty times for twice that he opened it, and nothing to look for but this disappointing creature day after day! At first she was shy, stole out a coy line of fingers to be shaken, and lisped; and out of that mood came right-about-face, with an exclamation of regret that she supposed she must not kiss me now. I projected, she drew back. 'Shall Janet go?' said I. 'Then if nobody 's present I 'll be talked of,' said she, moaning queerly. The tendency of her hair to creep loose of its bands gave her handsome face an aspect deliriously wild. I complimented her on her keeping so fresh, in spite of her salt-water widowhood. She turned the tables on me for looking so powerful, though I was dying for a foreign princess.

'Oh! but that 'll blow over,' she said; 'anything blows over as long as you don't go up to the altar'; and she eyed her ringed finger, woebegone, and flashed the pleasantest of smiles with the name of her William. Heriot, whom she always called Walter Heriot, was, she informed me, staying at Durstan Hall, the new great house, built on a plot of ground that the Lancashire millionaire had caught up, while the squire and the other landowners of the neighbourhood were sleeping. 'And if you get Walter Heriot to come to you, Harry Richmond, it 'll be better for him, I 'm sure,' she added, and naïvely: 'I 'd like to meet him up at the Grange.' Temple, she

said, had left the Navy and was reading in London for the Bar—good news to me.

'You have not told us anything about your princess, Harry,' Janet observed on the ride home.

'Do you take her for a real person, Janet?'

'One thinks of her as a snow-mountain you've been admiring.'

'Very well; so let her be.'

'Is she kind and good?'

'Yes.'

'Does she ride well?'

'She rides remarkably well.'

'She's fair, I suppose?'

'Janet, if I saw you married to Temple, it would be the second great wish of my heart.'

'Harry, you're a bit too cruel, as Julia would say.'

'Have you noticed she gets more and more Irish?'

'Perhaps she finds it is liked. Some women can adapt themselves . . . they're the happiest. All I meant to ask you is, whether your princess is like the rest of us?'

'Not at all,' said I, unconscious of hurting.

'Never mind. Don't be hard on Julia. She has the making of a good woman—a girl can see that; only she can't bear loneliness, and doesn't understand yet what it is to be loved by a true gentleman. Persons of that class can't learn it all at once.'

I was pained to see her in tears. Her figure was straight, and she spoke without a quaver of her voice.

'Heriot's an excellent fellow,' I remarked.

'He is. I can't think ill of my friends,' said she.

'Dear girl, is it these two who make you unhappy?'

'No; but dear old grandada! . . .'

The course of her mind was obvious. I would rather have had her less abrupt and more personal in revealing it. I stammered something.

'Heriot does not know you as I do,' she said, strangling a whimper. 'I was sure it was serious, though one 's accustomed to associate princesses with young men's dreams. I fear, Harry, it will half break our dear old grandada's heart. He is rough, and you have often been against him, for one unfortunate reason. If you knew him as I do you would pity him sincerely. He hardly grumbled at all at your terribly long absence. Poor old man! he hopes on.'

'He 's incurably unjust to my father.'

'Your father has been with you all the time, Harry? I guessed it.'

'Well?'

'It generally bodes no good to the Grange. Do pardon me for saying that. I know nothing of him; I know only that the squire is generous, and *that* I stand for with all my might. Forgive me for what I said.'

'Forgive you—with all my heart. I like you all the better. You 're a brave partisan. I don't expect women to be philosophers.'

'Well, Harry, I would take your side as firmly as anybody's.'

'Do, then; tell the squire how I am situated.'

'Ah!' she half sighed, 'I knew this was coming.'

'How could it other than come? You can do what you like with the squire. I 'm dependent on him, and I am betrothed to the Princess Ottilia. God knows how much she has to trample down on her part. She casts off—to speak plainly, she puts herself out of the line of succession, and for whom? for me. In her father's lifetime she will hardly yield me her hand; but I must immediately be in a position to offer mine. She may: who can tell? she is above all women in power and firmness. You talk of generosity; could there be a higher example of it?'

'I daresay; I know nothing of princesses,' Janet

murmured. 'I don't quite comprehend what she has done. The point is, what am I to do?'

'Prepare him for it. Soothe him in advance. Why, dear Janet, you can reconcile him to anything in a minute.'

'Lie to him downright?'

'Now what on earth is the meaning of that, and why can't you speak mildly?'

'I suppose I speak as I feel. I 'm a plain speaker, a plain person. You don't give me an easy task, friend Harry.'

'If you believe in his generosity, Janet, should you be afraid to put it to proof?'

'Grandada's generosity, Harry? I do believe in it as I believe in my own life. It happens to be the very thing I must keep myself from rousing in him, to be of any service to you. Look at the old house!' She changed her tone. 'Looking on old Riversley with the eyes of my head even, I think I 'm looking at something far away in the memory. Perhaps the deep red brick causes it. There never was a house with so many beautiful creepers. Bright as they are, you notice the roses on the wall. There 's a face for me for ever from every window; and good-bye, Riversley! Harry, I 'll obey your wishes.'

So saying, she headed me, trotting down the heath-track.

CHAPTER XXXVII

JANET RENOUNCES ME

An illness of old Sewis, the butler,—amazingly resembling a sick monkey in his bed,—kept me from paying a visit to Temple and seeing my father for several weeks,

during which time Janet loyally accustomed the squire to hear of the German princess, and she did it with a decent and agreeable cheerfulness that I quite approved of. I should have been enraged at a martyr-like appearance on her part, for I demanded a sprightly devotion to my interests, considering love so holy a thing, that where it existed, all surrounding persons were bound to do it homage and service. We were thrown together a great deal in attending on poor old Sewis, who would lie on his pillows recounting for hours my father's midnight summons of the inhabitants of Riversley, and his little Harry's infant expedition into the world. Temple and Heriot came to stay at the Grange, and assisted in some rough scene-painting—torrid colours representing the island of Jamaica. We hung it at the foot of old Sewis's bed. He awoke and contemplated it, and went downstairs the same day, cured, he declared: the fact being that the unfortunate picture testified too strongly to the reversal of all he was used to in life, in having those he served to wait on him. The squire celebrated his recovery by giving a servants' ball. Sewis danced with the handsomest lass, swung her to supper, and delivered an extraordinary speech, entirely concerning me, and rather to my discomposure, particularly so when it was my fate to hear that the old man had made me the heir of his savings. Such was his announcement, in a very excited voice, but incidentally upon a solemn adjuration to the squire to beware of his temper—govern his temper and not be a turncoat.

We were present at the head of the supper-table to hear our healths drunk. Sewis spoke like a half-caste oblivious of his training, and of the subjects he was at liberty to touch on as well. Evidently there was a weight of foreboding on his mind. He knew his master well. The squire excused him under the ejaculation, 'Drunk, by

the Lord ! ' Sewis went so far as to mention my father. ' He no disgrace, sar, he no disgrace, I say ! but he pull one way, old house pull other way, and 'tween 'em my little Harry torn apieces, squire. He set out in the night. " You not enter it any more ! " Very well. I go my lawyer next day. You see my Will, squire. Years ago, and little Harry so high. Old Sewis not the man to change. He no turncoat, squire. God bless you, my master ; you recollect, and ladies tell you if you forget, old Sewis no turncoat. You hate turncoat. You taught old Sewis, and God bless you, and Mr. Harry, and British Constitution, all Amen ! '

With that he bounded to bed. He was dead next morning.

The squire was humorous over my legacy. It amounted to about seventeen hundred pounds invested in Government Stock, and he asked me what I meant to do with it ; proposed a Charity to be established on behalf of decayed half-castes, insisting that servants' money could never be appropriated to the uses of gentlemen. All the while he was muttering, ' Turncoat ! eh ? turncoat ? '—proof that the word had struck where it was aimed. For me, after thinking on it, I had a superstitious respect for the legacy, so I determined, in spite of the squire's laughter over ' Sixty pounds per annum ! ' to let it rest in my name. I saw for the first time the possibility that I might not have my grandfather's wealth to depend upon. He warned me of growing miserly. With my father in London, living freely on my property, I had not much fear of that. However, I said discreetly, ' I don't mind spending when I see my way.'

' Oh ! see your way,' said he. ' Better a niggard than a chuckfist. Only, there 's my girl : she 's good at accounts. One 'll do for them, Harry ?—ha'n't been long enough at home yet ? '

Few were the occasions when our conversation did not diverge to this sort of interrogation. Temple and Heriot, with whom I took counsel, advised me to wait until the idea of the princess had worn its way into his understanding, and leave the work to Janet. 'Though,' said Heriot to me aside, 'upon my soul, it 's slaughter.' He believed that Janet felt keenly. But then, she admired him, and so they repaid one another.

I won my grandfather's confidence in practical matters on a trip we took into Wales. But it was not enough for me to be a man of business, he affirmed; he wanted me to have some ambition; why not stand for our county at the next general election? He offered me his Welsh borough if I thought fit to decline a contest. This was to speak as mightily as a German prince. Virtually, in wealth and power, he was a prince; but of how queer a kind! He was immensely gratified by my refraining to look out for my father on our return journey through London, and remarked, that I had not seen him for some time, he supposed. To which I said, no, I had not. He advised me to let the fellow run his length. Suggesting that he held it likely I contributed to 'the fellow's' support: he said generously, 'Keep clear of him, Hal: I add you a thousand a year to your allowance,' and damned me for being so thoughtful over it. I found myself shuddering at a breath of anger from him. Could he not with a word dash my hopes for ever? The warning I had taken from old Sewis transformed me to something like a hypocrite, and I dare say I gave the squire to understand, that I had not seen my father for a very long period and knew nothing of his recent doings.

'Been infernally quiet these last two or three years,' the squire muttered of the object of his aversion. 'I heard of a City widow last, sick as a Dover packet-boat 'bout the fellow! Well, the women are ninnies, but

you 're a man, Harry ; you 're not to be taken in any longer, eh ? '

I replied that I knew my father better now, and was asked how the deuce I knew him better ; it was the world I knew better after my stay on the Continent.

I contained myself enough to say, ' Very well, the world, sir.'

' Flirted with one of their princesses ? ' He winked.

' On that subject I will talk to you some other time,' said I.

' Got to pay an indemnity ? or what ? ' He professed alarm, and pushed for explanations, with the air of a man of business ready to help me if need were. ' Make a clean breast of it, Harry. You 're not the son of Tom Fool the Bastard for nothing, I 'll swear. All the same you 're Beltham ; you 're my grandson and heir, and I 'll stand by you. Out with 't ! She 's a princess, is she ? '

The necessity for correcting his impressions taught me to think the moment favourable. I said, ' I am engaged to her, sir.'

He returned promptly : ' Then you 'll break it off.'

I shook my head.

' Why, you can't jilt my girl at home ! ' said he.

' Do you find a princess objectionable, sir ? '

' Objectionable ? She 's a foreigner. I don't know her. I never saw her. Here 's my Janet I 've brought up for you, under my own eyes, out of the way of every damned soft-sawderer, safe and plump as a melon under a glass, and you fight shy of her, and go and engage yourself to a foreigner I don't know and never saw ! By George, Harry, I 'll call in a parson to settle you soon as ever we sight Riversley. I 'll couple you, by George, I will ! 'fore either of you know whether you 're on your legs or your backs.'

We were in the streets of London, so he was obliged to moderate his vehemence.

'Have you consulted Janet?' said I.

'Consulted her? ever since she was a chick with half a feather on.'

'A chick with half a feather on,' I remarked, 'is not always of the same mind as a piece of poultry of full plumage.'

'Hang your sneering and your talk of a fine girl, like my Janet, as a piece of poultry, you young rooster! You toss your head up like a cock too conceited to crow. I 'll swear the girl 's in love with you. She does you the honour to be fond of you. She 's one in a million. A handsome girl, straight-backed, honest, just a dash, and not too much, of our blood in her.'

'Consult her again, sir,' I broke in. 'You will discover she is not of your way of thinking.'

'Do you mean to say she 's given you a left-hander, Harry?'

'I have only to say that I have not given her the option.'

He groaned going up the steps of his hotel, faced me once or twice, and almost gained my sympathy by observing, 'When we 're boys, the old ones worry us; when we 're old ones, the boys begin to tug!' He rarely spoke so humanely,—rarely, at least, to me.

For a wonder, he let the matter drop: possibly because he found me temperate. I tried the system on him with good effect during our stay in London; that is, I took upon myself to be always cool, always courteous, deliberate in my replies, and not uncordial, though I was for representing the reserved young man. I obtained some praise for my style and bearing among his acquaintances. To one lady passing an encomium on me, he said, 'Oh, some foreign princess has been training him,' which seemed to me of good augury.

My friends Temple and Heriot were among the Riversley guests at Christmas. We rode over to John Thresher's, of whom we heard that the pretty Mabel Sweetwinter had disappeared, and understood that suspicion had fallen upon one of us gentlemen. Bob, her brother, had gone the way of the bravest English fellows of his class—to America. We called on the miller, a soured old man. Bob's evasion affected him more than Mabel's, Martha Thresher said, in derision of our sex. I was pained to hear from her that Bob supposed me the misleader of his sister ; and that he had, as she believed, left England, to avoid the misery of ever meeting me again, because he liked me so much. She had been seen walking down the lanes with some one resembling me in figure. Heriot took the miller's view, counting the loss of one stout young Englishman to his country of far greater importance than the escapades of dozens of girls, for which simple creatures he had no compassion : he held the expression of it a sham. He had grown coxcombical. Without talking of his conquests, he talked largely of the ladies who were possibly in the situation of victims to his grace of person, though he did not do so with any unctuous boasting. On the contrary, there was a rather taking undertone of regret that his enfeebled over-fat country would give her military son no worthier occupation. He laughed at the mention of Julia Bulsted's name. 'She proves, Richie, marriage is the best of all receipts for women, just as it 's the worst for men. Poor Billy Bulsted, for instance, a first-rate seaman, and his heart 's only half in his profession since he and Julia swore their oath ; and no wonder, —he made something his own that won't go under lock and key. No military or naval man ought ever to marry.'

'Stop,' said Temple, 'is the poor old country—— How about continuing the race of heroes ? '

Heriot commended him to rectories, vicarages, and curates' lodgings for breeding grounds, and coming round to Julia related one of the racy dialogues of her married life. 'The salt-water widow 's delicious. Billy rushes home from his ship in a hurry. What 's this Greg writes me ?—That he 's got a friend of his to drink with him, d' ye mean, William ?—A friend of yours, ma'am.—And will you say a friend of mine is not a friend of yours, William ?—Julia, you 're driving me mad !—And is that far from crazy, where you said I drove you at first sight of me, William ? Back to his ship goes Billy with a song of love and constancy.'

I said nothing of my chagrin at the behaviour of the pair who had furnished my first idea of the romantic beauty of love.

'Why does she talk twice as Irish as she used to, Heriot ? '

'Just to coax the world to let her be as nonsensical as she likes. She 's awfully dull ; she has only her nonsense to amuse her. I repeat : soldiers and sailors oughtn't to marry. I 'm her best friend. I am, on my honour : for I 'm going to make Billy give up the service, since he can't give her up. There she is ! ' he cried out, and waved his hat to a lady on horseback some way down the slope of a road leading to the view of our heathland : 'There 's the only girl living fit to marry a man and swear she 'll stick to him through life and death.'

He started at a gallop. Temple would have gone too at any possible speed, for he knew as well as I did that Janet was the girl alone capable of winning a respectful word from Heriot ; but I detained him to talk of Ottilia and my dismal prospect of persuading the squire to consent to my proposal for her, and to dower her in a manner worthy a princess. He doled out his yes and no to me vacantly. Janet and Heriot came at a walking pace to

meet us, he questioning her, she replying, but a little differently from her usual habit of turning her full face to the speaker. He was evidently startled, and, to judge from his posture, repeated his question, as one would say, '*You* did this?' She nodded, and then uttered some rapid words, glanced at him, laughed shyly, and sank her features into repose as we drew near. She had a deep blush on her face. I thought it might be, that Janet and her loud champion had come to particular terms, a supposition that touched me with regrets for Temple's sake. But Heriot was not looking pleased. It happened that whatever Janet uttered struck a chord of opposition in me. She liked the Winter and the Winter sunsets, had hopes of a frost for skating, liked our climate, thought our way of keeping Christmas venerable, rejoiced in dispensing the squire's bounties—called them bounties, joined Heriot in abusing foreign countries to the exaltation of her own: all this with 'Well, Harry, I 'm sorry you don't think as we do. And we do, don't we?' she addressed him.

'I reserve a point,' he said, and not playfully.

She appeared distressed, and courted a change of expression in his features, and I have to confess that never having seen her gaze upon any one save myself in that fashion, which was with her very winning, especially where some of her contralto tones of remonstrance or entreaty aided it, I felt as a man does at a neighbour's shadow cast over his rights of property.

Heriot dropped to the rear: I was glad to leave her with Temple, and glad to see them canter ahead together on the sand of the heaths.

'She has done it,' Heriot burst out abruptly. 'She has done it!' he said again. 'Upon my soul, I never wished in my life before that I was a marrying man: I might have a chance of ending worth something. She has won the squire round with a thundering fib, and you 're

to have the German if you can get her. Don't be in a hurry. The squire 'll speak to you to-night: but think over it. Will you? Think what a girl this is. I believe on my honour no man ever had such an offer of a true woman. Come, don't think it 's Heriot speaking—I 've always liked her, of course. But I have always respected her, and that 's not of course. Depend upon it, a woman who can be a friend of men is the right sort of woman to make a match with. Do you suppose she couldn't have a dozen fellows round her at the lift of her finger?—the pick of the land! I 'd trust her with an army. I tell you, Janet Ilchester 's the only girl alive who 'll double the man she marries. I don't know another who wouldn't make the name of wife laugh the poor devil out of house and company. She 's firm as a rock; and sweet as a flower on it! Will that touch you? Bah! Richie, let 's talk like men. I feel for her because she 's fond of you, and I know what it is when a girl like that sets her heart on a fellow. There,' he concluded, 'I 'd ask you to go down on your knees and pray before you decide against her!'

Heriot succeeded in raising a certain dull indistinct image in my mind of a well-meaning girl, to whom I was bound to feel thankful, and felt so. I thanked Heriot, too, for his friendly intentions. He had never seen the Princess Ottilia. And at night I thanked my grandfather. He bore himself, on the whole, like the good and kindly old gentleman Janet loved to consider him. He would not stand in my light, he said, recurring to that sheet-anchor of a tolerant sentence whenever his forehead began to gather clouds. He regretted that Janet was no better than her sex in her preference for rakes, and wished me to the deuce for bringing Heriot into the house, and not knowing when I was lucky. 'German grandchildren, eh!' he muttered. No Beltham had ever

married a foreigner. What was the time fixed between us for the marriage? He wanted to see his line safe before he died. 'How do I know this foreign woman 'll bear? ' he asked, expecting an answer. His hand was on the back of a chair, grasping and rocking it; his eyes bent stormily on the carpet; they were set blinking rapidly after a glance at me. Altogether his self-command was creditable to Janet's tuition.

Janet met me next day, saying with some insolence (so it struck me from her liveliness): 'Well, it 's all right, Harry? Now you 'll be happy, I hope.' I did not shine in my reply. Her amiable part appeared to be to let me see how brilliant and gracious the commonplace could be made to look. She kept Heriot at the Grange, against the squire's remonstrance and her mother's. 'It 's to keep him out of harm's way: the women he knows are not of the best kind for him,' she said, with astounding fatuity. He submitted, and seemed to like it. She must be teaching Temple to skate figures in the frost, with a great display of good-humoured patience, and her voice at musical pitches. But her principal affectation was to talk on matters of business with Mr. Burgin and Mr. Trewint, the squire's lawyer and bailiff, on mines and interest, on money and economical questions; not shrinking from politics either, until the squire cries out to the males assisting in the performance, 'Gad, she 's a head as good as our half-dozen put together,' and they servilely joined their fragmentary capitals in agreement. She went so far as to retain Peterborough to teach her Latin. He was idling in the expectation of a living in the squire's gift.

The annoyance for me was that I could not detach myself from a contemplation of these various scenes, by reverting to my life in Germany. The preposterous closing of my interview with Ottilia blocked the way,

and I was unable to write to her—unable to address her even in imagination, without pangs of shame at the review of the petty conspiracy I had sanctioned to entrap her to plight her hand to me, and without perpetually multiplying excuses for my conduct. So to escape them I was reduced to study Janet, forming one of her satellites. She could say to me impudently, with all the air of a friendly comrade, 'Had your letter from Germany yet, Harry?' She flew—she was always on the chase. I saw her permit Heriot to kiss her hand, and then the squire appeared, and Heriot and she burst into laughter, and the squire, with a puzzled face, would have the game explained to him, but understood not a bit of it, only growled at me; upon which Janet became serious and chid him. I was told by my aunt Dorothy to admire this behaviour of hers. One day she certainly did me a service: a paragraph in one of the newspapers spoke of my father, not flatteringly: 'Richmond is in the field again,' it commenced. The squire was waiting for her to hand the paper to him. None of us could comprehend why she played him off and denied him his right to the first perusal of the news; she was voluble, almost witty, full of sprightly Roxalana petulance.

'This paper,' she said, 'deserves to be burnt,' and she was allowed to burn it—money article, mining column as well—on the pretext of an infamous anti-Tory leader, of which she herself composed the first sentence to shock the squire completely. I had sight of that paper some time afterwards. Richmond was in the field again, it stated, with mock flourishes. But that was not the worst. My grandfather's name was down there, and mine, and Princess Ottilia's. My father's connection with the court of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld was alluded to as the latest, and next to his winning the heiress of Riversley, the most successful of his ventures, inasmuch as his son,

if rumour was to be trusted, had obtained the promise of the hand of the princess. The paragraph was an excerpt from a gossiping weekly journal, perhaps less malevolent than I thought it. There was some fun to be got out of a man who, the journal in question was informed, had joined the arms of England and a petty German principality stamped on his plate and furniture.

My gratitude to Janet was fervent enough when I saw what she had saved me from. I pressed her hand and held it. I talked stupidly, but I made my cruel position intelligible to her, and she had the delicacy, on this occasion, to keep her sentiments regarding my father unuttered. We sat hardly less than an hour side by side —I know not how long hand in hand. The end was an extraordinary trembling in the limb abandoned to me. It seized her frame. I would have detained her, but it was plain she suffered both in her heart and her pride. Her voice was under fair command—more than mine was. She counselled me to go to London, at once. 'I would be off to London if I were you, Harry,'—for the purpose of checking my father's extravagances,—would have been the further wording, which she spared me; and I thanked her, wishing, at the same time, that she would get the habit of using choicer phrases whenever there might, by chance, be a stress of emotion between us. Her trembling, and her 'I 'd be off,' came into unpleasant collision in the recollection. I acknowledge to myself that she was a true and hearty friend. She listened with interest to my discourse on the necessity of my being in Parliament before I could venture to propose formally for the hand of the princess, and undertook to bear the burden of all consequent negotiations with my grandfather. If she would but have allowed me to speak of Temple, instead of saying, 'Don't, Harry, I like him so much!' at the very mention of his name, I should have

sincerely felt my indebtedness to her, and some admiration of her fine spirit and figure besides. I could not even agree with my aunt Dorothy that Janet was handsome. When I had to grant her a pardon I appreciated her better.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MY BANKERS' BOOK

THE squire again did honour to Janet's eulogy and good management of him.

'And where,' said she, 'would you find a Radical to behave so generously, Harry, when it touches him so?'

He accorded me his permission to select my side in politics, merely insisting that I was never to change it, and this he requested me to swear to, for (he called the ghost of old Sewis to witness) he abhorred a turncoat.

'If you 're to be a Whig, or a sneaking half-and-half, I can't help you much,' he remarked. 'I can pop á young Tory in for my borough, maybe; but I can't insult a number of independent Englishmen by asking them to vote for the opposite crew; that 's reasonable, eh? And I can't promise you plumpers for the county neither. You can date your Address from Riversley. You 'll have your house in town. Tell me this princess of yours is ready with her hand, and,' he threw in roughly, 'is a respectable young woman, I 'll commence building. You 'll have a house fit for a prince in town and country, both.'

Temple had produced an effect on him by informing him that 'this princess of mine' was entitled to be considered a fit and proper person, in rank and blood, for an alliance with the proudest royal Houses of Europe, and my grand-

father was not quite destitute of consolation in the prospect I presented to him. He was a curious study to me, of the Tory mind, in its attachment to solidity, fixity, certainty, its unmatched generosity within a limit, its devotion to the family, and its family eye for the country. An immediate introduction to Ottilia would have won him to enjoy the idea of his grandson's marriage; but not having seen her, he could not realize her dignity, nor even the womanliness of a foreign woman.

'Thank God for one thing,' he said: 'we shan't have that fellow bothering—shan't have the other half of your family messing the business. You 'll have to account for him to your wife as you best can. I 've nothing to do with him, mind that. He came to my house, stole my daughter, crazed her wits, dragged us all . . .'

The excuse to turn away from the hearing of abuse of my father was too good to be neglected, though it was horribly humiliating that I should have to take advantage of it—vexatious that I should seem chargeable with tacit lying in allowing the squire to suppose the man he hated to be a stranger to the princess. Not feeling sure whether it might be common prudence to delude him even passively, I thought of asking Janet for her opinion, but refrained. A stout deceiver has his merits, but a feeble hypocrite applying to friends to fortify him in his shifts and tergiversations must provoke contempt. I desired that Janet might continue to think well of me. I was beginning to drop in my own esteem, which was the mirror of my conception of Ottilia's view of her lover.

Now, had I consulted Janet, I believe the course of my history would have been different, for she would not then, I may imagine, have been guilty of her fatal slip of the tongue that threw us into heavy seas when we thought ourselves floating on canal waters. A canal barge (an image to me of the most perfect attainable peace),

suddenly, on its passage through our long fir-woods, with their scented reeds and flowering rushes, wild balsam and silky cotton-grass beds, sluiced out to sea and storm, would be somewhat in my likeness soon after a single luckless observation had passed at our Riversley breakfast-table one Sunday morning.

My aunt Dorothy and Mr. Peterborough were conversing upon the varieties of Christian sects, and particularly such as approached nearest to Anglicanism, together with the strange, saddening fact that the Christian religion appeared to be more divided than, Peterborough regretted to say, the forms of idolatry established by the Buddha, Mahomet, and other impostors. He claimed the audacious merit for us, that we did not discard the reason of man: we admitted man's finite reason to our school of faith, and it was found refractory. Hence our many divisions.

'The Roman Catholics admit reason?' said Janet, who had too strong a turn for showing her keenness in little encounters with Peterborough.

'No,' said he; 'the Protestants.' And, anxious to elude her, he pressed on to enchain my aunt Dorothy's attention. Janet plagued him meanwhile; and I helped her. We ran him and his schoolboy, the finite refractory, up and down, until Peterborough was glad to abandon him, and Janet said, 'Did you preach to the Germans much?' He had officiated in Prince Ernest's private chapel: not, he added in his egregious modesty, not that he personally wished to officiate.

'It was Harry's wish?' Janet said, smiling.

'My post of tutor,' Peterborough hastened to explain, 'was almost entirely supernumerary. The circumstances being so, I the more readily acquiesced in the title of private chaplain, prepared to fulfil such duties as devolved upon me in that capacity, and acting thereon I proffered my occasional services. Lutheranism and

Anglicanism are not, doubtless you are aware, divided on the broader bases. We are common Protestants. The Papacy, I can assure you, finds as little favour with one as with the other. Yes, I held forth, as you would say, from time to time. My assumption of the title of private chaplain, it was thought, improved the family dignity—that is, on *our* side.'

'Thought by Harry?' said Janet; and my aunt Dorothy said, 'You and Harry had a consultation about it?'

'Wanted to appear as grand as they could,' quoth the squire.

Peterborough signified an assent, designed to modify the implication. 'Not beyond due bounds, I trust, sir.'

'Oh! now I understand,' Janet broke out in the falsetto notes of a puzzle solved in the mind. 'It was his father! Harry proclaiming his private chaplain!'

'Mr. Harry's father did first suggest——' said Peterborough, but her quickly-altered features caused him to draw in his breath, as she had done after one short laugh.

My grandfather turned a round side-eye on me, hard as a cock's.

Janet immediately started topics to fill Peterborough's mouth: the weather, the walk to church, the probable preacher. 'And, grandada,' said she to the squire, who was muttering ominously with a grim under-jaw, 'His private chaplain!' and for this once would not hear her, —'Grandada, I shall drive you over to see papa this afternoon.' She talked as if nothing had gone wrong. Peterborough, criminal red, attacked a jam-pot for a diversion. 'Such sweets are rare indeed on the Continent,' he observed to my aunt Dorothy. 'Our home-made dainties are matchless.'

'Private chaplain!' the squire growled again.

'It 's you that preach this afternoon,' Janet said to Peterborough. 'Do you give us an extempore sermon ?'

'You remind me, Miss Ilchester, I must look to it ; I have a little trimming to do.'

Peterborough thought he might escape, but the squire arrested him. 'You 'll give me five minutes before you 're out of the house, please. D' ye smoke on Sundays ?'

'Not on Sundays, sir,' said Peterborough, openly and cordially, as to signify that they were of one mind regarding the perniciousness of Sunday smoking.

'See you don't set fire to my ricks with your foreign chaplain's tricks. I spied you puffing behind one t' other day. There,' the squire dispersed Peterborough's unnecessary air of abstruse recollection, 'don't look as though you were trying to hit on a pin's head in a bushel of oats. Don't set my ricks on fire—that 's all.'

'Mr. Peterborough,' my aunt Dorothy interposed her voice to soften this rough treatment of him with the offer of some hot-house flowers for his sitting-room.

'Oh, I thank you !' I heard the garlanded victim lowing as I left him to the squire's mercy.

Janet followed me out. 'It was my fault, Harry. You won't blame him, I know. But will he fib ? I don't think he 's capable of it, and I 'm sure he can't run and double. Grandada will have him fast before a minute is over.'

I told her to lose no time in going and extracting the squire's promise that Peterborough should have his living,—so much it seemed possible to save.

She flew back, and in Peterborough's momentary absence, did her work. Nothing could save the unhappy gentleman from a distracting scene and much archaic English. The squire's power of vituperation was notorious : he could be more than a match for roadside navvies

and predatory tramps in cogency of epithet. Peterborough came to me drenched, and wailing that he had never heard such language,—never dreamed of it. And to find himself the object of it!—and, worse, to be unable to conscientiously defend himself! The pain to him was in the conscience,—which is, like the spleen, a function whose uses are only to be understood in its derangement. He had eased his conscience to every question right out, and he rejoiced to me at the immense relief it gave him. Conscientiously, he could not deny that he knew the squire's objection to my being in my father's society; and he had connived at it 'for reasons, my dearest Harry, I can justify to God and man, but not —I had to confess as much—not, I grieve to say, to your grandfather. I attempted to do justice to the amiable qualities of the absent. In a moment I was assailed with epithets that . . . and not a word is to be got in when he is so violent. One has to make up one's mind to act Andromeda, and let him be the sea-monster, as somebody has said; I forget the exact origin of the remark.'

The squire certainly had a whole ocean at command. I strung myself to pass through the same performance. To my astonishment I went unchallenged. Janet vehemently asserted that she had mollified the angry old man, who, however, was dark of visage, though his tongue kept silence. He was gruff over his wine-glass: the blandishments of his favourite did not brighten him. From his point of view he had been treated vilely, and he was apparently inclined to nurse his rancour and keep my fortunes trembling in the balance. Under these circumstances it was impossible for me to despatch a letter to Ottilia, though I found that I could write one now, and I sat in my room writing all day,—most eloquent stuff it was. The shadow of misfortune restored the sense of my heroical situation, which my father had

extinguished, and this unlocked the powers of speech. I wrote so admirably that my wretchedness could enjoy the fine millinery I decorated it in. Then to tear the noble composition to pieces was a bitter gratification. Ottilia's station repelled and attracted me mysteriously. I could not separate her from it, nor keep my love of her from the contentions into which it threw me. In vain I raved, 'What is rank?' There was a magnet in it that could at least set me quivering and twisting, behaving like a man spellbound, as madly as any hero of the ballads under a wizard's charm.

At last the squire relieved us. He fixed that side-cast cock's eye of his on me, and said, 'Where 's your bankers' book, sir?'

I presumed that it was with my bankers, but did not suggest the possibility that my father might have it in his custody; for he had a cheque-book of his own, and regulated our accounts. Why not? I thought, and flushed somewhat defiantly. The money was mine.

'Any objection to my seeing that book?' said the squire.

'None whatever, sir.'

He nodded. I made it a point of honour to write for the book to be sent down to me immediately.

The book arrived, and the squire handed it to me to break the cover, insisting, 'You 're sure you wouldn't rather not have me look at it?'

'Quite,' I replied. The question of money was to me perfectly unimportant. I did not see a glimpse of danger in his perusing the list of my expenses.

''Cause I give you my word I know nothing about it now,' he said.

I complimented him on his frank method of dealing, and told him to look at the book if he pleased, but with prudence sufficiently awake to check the declaration that I had not once looked at it myself.

He opened it. We had just assembled in the hall, where breakfast was laid during Winter, before a huge wood fire. Janet had her teeth on her lower lip, watching the old man's face. I did not condescend to be curious; but when I turned my head to him he was puffing through thin lips, and then his mouth crumpled in a knob. He had seen sights.

'By George, I must have breakfast 'fore I go into this!' he exclaimed, and stared as if he had come out of an oven.

Dorothy Beltham reminded him that Prayers had not been read.

'Prayers!' He was about to objurgate, but affirmatived her motion to ring the bell for the servants, and addressed Peterborough: 'You read 'em abroad every morning?'

Peterborough's conscience started off on its inevitable jog-trot at a touch of the whip. 'A—yes; that is—oh, it was my office.' He had to recollect with exactitude: 'I should specify exceptions; there were intervals . . .'

'Please, open your Bible,' the squire cut him short; 'I don't want a damned fine edge on everything.'

Partly for an admonition to him, or in pure nervousness, Peterborough blew his nose monstrously: an unlucky note; nothing went well after it. 'A slight cold,' he murmured and resumed the note, and threw himself maniacally into it. The unexpected figure of Captain Bulsted on tiptoe, wearing the ceremonial depressed air of intruders on these occasions, distracted our attention for a moment.

'Fresh from ship, William?' the squire called out.

The captain ejaculated a big word, to judge of it from the aperture, but it was mute as his footing on the carpet, and he sat and gazed devoutly toward Peterborough, who had waited to see him take his seat, and must now, in his

hurry to perform his duty, sweep the peccant little red-bound book to the floor. 'Here, I 'll have that,' said the squire. 'Allow me, sir,' said Peterborough; and they sprang into a collision.

'Would you jump out of your pulpit to pick up an old woman's umbrella?' the squire asked him in wrath, and muttered of requiring none of his clerical legerdemain with books of business. Tears were in Peterborough's eyes. My aunt Dorothy's eyes dwelt kindly on him to encourage him, but the man's irritable nose was again his enemy.

Captain Bulsted chanced to say in the musical voice of inquiry: 'Prayers are not yet over, are they?'

'No, nor never will be with a parson blowing his horn at this rate,' the squire rejoined. 'And mind you,' he said to Peterborough, after dismissing the servants, to whom my aunt Dorothy read the morning lessons apart, 'I 'd not have had this happen, sir, for money in lumps. I 've always known I should hang the day when my house wasn't blessed in the morning by prayer. So did my father, and his before him. Fiddle! sir, you can't expect young people to wear decent faces when the parson 's hopping over the floor like a flea, and trumpeting as if the organ-pipe wouldn't have the sermon at any price. You tried to juggle me out of this book here.'

'On my!—indeed, sir, no!' Peterborough proclaimed his innocence, and it was unlikely that the squire should have suspected him.

Captain Bulsted had come to us for his wife, whom he had not found at home on his arrival last midnight.

'God bless my soul,' said the squire, 'you don't mean to tell me she 's gone off, William?'

'Oh! dear, no, sir,' said the captain, 'she 's only cruising.'

The squire recommended a draught of old ale. The captain accepted it. His comportment was cheerful in a sober fashion, notwithstanding the transparent perturbation of his spirit. He answered my aunt Dorothy's questions relating to Julia simply and manfully, as became a gallant seaman, cordially excusing his wife for not having been at home to welcome him, with the singular plea, based on his knowledge of the sex, that the nearer she knew him to be the less able was she to sit on her chair waiting like Patience. He drank his ale from the hands of Sillabin, our impassive new butler, who had succeeded Sewis, the squire told him, like a Whig Ministry the Tory ; proof that things were not improving.

'I thought, sir, things were getting better,' said the captain.

'The damnedest mistake ever made, William. How about the Fall of Man, then ? eh ? You talk like a heathen Radical. It 's Scripture says we 're going from better to worse, and that 's Tory doctrine. And stick to the good as long as you can ! Why, William, you were a jolly bachelor once.'

'Sir, and ma'am,' the captain bowed to Dorothy Beltham, 'I have, thanks to you, never known happiness but in marriage, and all I want is my wife.'

The squire fretted for Janet to depart. 'I 'm going, grandada,' she said. 'You 'll oblige me by not attending to any matter of business to-day. Give me that book of Harry's to keep for you.'

'How d' ye mean, my dear ? '

'It 's bad work done on a Sunday, you know.'

'So it is. I 'll lock up the book.'

'I have your word for that, grandada,' said Janet.

The ladies retired, taking Peterborough with them.

'Good-bye to the frocks ! and now, William, out with your troubles,' said the squire.

The captain's eyes were turned to the door my aunt Dorothy had passed through.

'You remember the old custom, sir!'

'Ay, do I, William. Sorry for you then; infernally sorry for you now, that I am! But you 've run your head into the halter.'

'I love her, sir; I love her to distraction. Let any man on earth say she 's not an angel, I flatten him dead as his lie. By the way, sir, I am bound in duty to inform you I am speaking of my wife.'

'To be sure you are, William, and a trim schooner-yacht she is.'

'She 's off, sir; she 's off!'

I thought it time to throw in a word. 'Captain Bulsted, I should hold any man but you accountable to me for hinting such things of my friend.'

'Harry, your hand,' he cried, sparkling.

'Hum; his hand!' growled the squire. 'His hand 's been pretty lively on the Continent, William. Here, look at this book, William, and the bundle o' cheques! No, I promised my girl. We 'll go into it to-morrow, he and I, early. The fellow has shot away thousands and thousands—been gallivanting among his foreign duchesses and countesses. There 's a petticoat in that bank-book of his; and more than one, I wager. Now he 's for marrying a foreign princess—got himself in a tangle there, it seems.'

'Mightily well done, Harry!' Captain Bulsted struck a terrific encomium on my shoulder, groaning, 'May she be true to you, my lad!'

The squire asked him if he was going to church that morning.

'I go to my post, sir, by my fireside,' the captain replied; nor could he be induced to leave his post vacant by the squire's promise to him of a sermon that would

pickle his temper for a whole week's wear and tear. He regretted extremely that he could not enjoy so excellent a trial of his patience, but he felt himself bound to go to his post and wait.

I walked over to Bulsted with him, and heard on the way that it was Heriot who had called for her and driven her off. 'The man had been, I supposed,' Captain Bulsted said, 'deputed by some of you to fetch her over to Riversley. My servants mentioned his name. I thought it adviseable not to trouble the ladies with it to-day.' He meditated. 'I hoped I should find her at the Grange in the morning, Harry. I slept on it, rather than startle the poor lamb in the night.'

I offered him to accompany him at once to Heriot's quarters.

'What! and let my wife know I doubted her fidelity. My girl shall never accuse me of that.'

As it turned out, Julia had been taken by Heriot on a visit to Lady Maria Higginson, the wife of the intrusive millionaire, who particularly desired to know her more intimately. Thoughtless Julia, accepting the impudent invitation without scruple, had allowed herself to be driven away without stating the place of her destination. She and Heriot were in the Higginsons' pew at church. Hearing from Janet of her husband's arrival, she rushed home, and there, instead of having to beg forgiveness, was summoned to grant pardon. Captain Bulsted had drawn largely on Squire Gregory's cellar to assist him in keeping his post.

The pair appeared before us fondling ineffably next day, neither one of them capable of seeing that our domestic peace at the Grange was unseated. 'We 're the two wretchedest creatures alive; haven't any of ye to spare a bit of sympathy for us?' Julia began. 'We 're like on a pitchfork. There 's William's duty to his

country, and there 's his affection for me, and they won't go together, because Government, which is that horrid Admiralty, fears pitching and tossing for post-captains' wives. And William away, I 'm distracted, and the Admiralty's hair 's on end if he stops. And, 'deed, Miss Beltham, I 'm not more than married to just half a husband.'

The captain echoed her, ' Half ! but happy enough for twenty whole ones, if you 'll be satisfied, my duck.'

Julia piteously entreated me, for my future wife's sake, not to take service under Government. As for the Admiralty, she said, it had no characteristic but the abominable one, that it hated a woman. The squire laid two or three moderately coarse traps for the voluble frank creature, which she evaded with surprising neatness, showing herself more awake than one would have imagined her. Janet and I fancied she must have come with the intention to act uxorious husband and Irish wife for the distinct purpose of diverting the squire's wrath from me, for he greatly delighted in the sight of merry wedded pairs. But they were as simple as possible in their display of happiness.

It chanced that they came opportunely. My bankers' book had been the theme all the morning, and an astonishing one to me equally with my grandfather. Since our arrival in England, my father had drawn nine thousand pounds. The sums expended during our absence on the Continent reached the perplexing figures of forty-eight thousand. I knew it too likely, besides, that all debts were not paid. Self—self—self drew for thousands at a time ; sometimes, as the squire's convulsive forefinger indicated, for many thousands within a week. It was incomprehensible to him until I, driven at bay by questions and insults, and perceiving that concealment could not long be practised, made a virtue of the situation by

telling him (what he in fact must have seen) that my father possessed a cheque-book as well as I, and likewise drew upon the account. We had required the money; it was mine, and I had sold out Bank Stock and Consols,—which gave very poor interest, I remarked cursorily—and had kept the money at my bankers', to draw upon according to our necessities. I pitied the old man while speaking. His face was livid; language died from his lips. He asked to have little things explained to him—the two cheque-books, for instance,—and what I thought of doing when this money was all gone: for he supposed I did not expect the same amount to hand every two years; unless, he added, I had given him no more than a couple of years' lease of life when I started for my tour. 'Then the money 's gone!' he summed up; and this was the signal for redemanding explanations. Had he not treated me fairly and frankly in handing over my own to me on the day of my majority? Yes.

'And like a fool, you think—eh?'

'I have no such thought in my head, sir.'

'You have been keeping that fellow in his profligacy, and you 're keeping him now. Why, you 're all but a beggar! . . . Comes to my house, talks of his birth, carries off my daughter, makes her mad, lets her child grow up to lay hold of her money, and then grips him fast and pecks him, fleeces him! . . . You 're beggared—d' ye know that? He 's had the two years of you, and sucked you dry. What were you about? What were you doing? Did you have your head on? You shared cheque-books? good! . . . The devil in hell never found such a fool as you! You had your house full of your foreign bonyrobers—eh? Out with it! How did you pass your time? Drunk and dancing?'

By such degrees my grandfather worked himself up to the pitch for his style of eloquence. I have given a faint

specimen of it. When I took the liberty to consider that I had heard enough, he followed me out of the library into the hall, where Janet stood. In her presence, he charged the princess and her family with being a pack of greedy adventurers, conspirators with 'that fellow' to plunder me; and for a proof of it, he quoted my words, that my father's time had been spent in superintending the opening of a coal-mine on Prince Ernest's estate. 'That fellow pretending to manage a coal-mine!' Could not a girl see it was a shuffle to hoodwink a greenhorn? And now he remembered it was Colonel Goodwin and his daughter who had told him of having seen 'the fellow' engaged in playing Court-buffoon to a petty German prince, and performing his antics, cutting capers like a clown at a fair.

'Shame!' said Janet.

'Hear her!' The squire turned to me.

But she cried: 'Oh! grandada, hear yourself! or don't, but be silent. If Harry has offended you, speak like one gentleman to another. Don't rob me of my love for you: I haven't much besides that.'

'No, because of a scoundrel and his young idiot!'

Janet frowned in earnest, and said: 'I don't permit you to change the meaning of the words I speak.'

He muttered a proverb of the stables. Reduced to behave temperately, he began the whole history of my bankers' book anew—the same queries, the same explosions and imprecations.

'Come for a walk with me, dear Harry,' said Janet.

I declined to be protected in such a manner, absurdly on my dignity; and the refusal, together possibly with some air of contemptuous independence in the tone of it, brought the squire to a climax. 'You won't go out and walk with her? You shall go down on your knees to her and beg her to give you her arm for a walk. By God!

you shall, now, here, on the spot, or off you go to your German princess, with your butler's legacy, and nothing more from me but good-bye and the door bolted. Now, down with you ! '

He expected me to descend.

' And if he did, he would never have my arm.' Janet's eyes glittered hard on the squire.

' Before that rascal dies, my dear, he shall whine like a beggar out in the cold for the tips of your fingers ! '

' Not if he asks me first,' said Janet.

This set him off again. He realized her prospective generosity, and contrasted it with my actual obtuseness. Janet changed her tactics. She assumed indifference. But she wanted experience, and a Heriot to help her in playing a part. She did it badly—overdid it ; so that the old man, now imagining both of us to be against his scheme for uniting us, counted my iniquity as twofold. Her phrase, ' Harry and I will always be friends,' roused the loudest of his denunciations upon me, as though there never had been question of the princess, so inveterate was his mind's grasp of its original designs. Friends ! Would our being friends give him heirs by law to his estate and name ? And so forth. My aunt Dorothy came to moderate his invectives. In her room the heavily-burdened little book of figures was produced, and the items read aloud ; and her task was to hear them without astonishment, but with a business-like desire to comprehend them accurately, a method that softened the squire's outbursts by degrees. She threw out hasty running commentaries : ' Yes, that was for a yacht ' ; and ' They were living at the Court of a prince ' ; such and such a sum was ' large, but Harry knew his grandfather did not wish him to make a poor appearance.'

' Why, do you mean to swear to me, on your oath,

Dorothy Beltham,' said the squire, amazed at the small amazement he created, 'you think these two fellows have been spending within the right margin? What 'll be women's ideas next!'

'No,' she answered demurely. 'I think Harry has been extravagant, and has had his lesson. And surely it is better now than later? But you are not making allowances for his situation as the betrothed of a princess.'

'That 's what turns your head,' said he; and she allowed him to have the notion, and sneer at herself and her sex.

'How about this money drawn since he came home?' the squire persisted.

My aunt Dorothy reddened. He struck his finger on the line marking the sum, repeating his demand; and at this moment Captain Bulsted and Julia arrived. The ladies manœuvred so that the captain and the squire were left alone together. Some time afterward the captain sent out word that he begged his wife's permission to stay to dinner at the Grange, and requested me to favour him by conducting his wife to Bulsted: proof, as Julia said, that the two were engaged in a pretty hot tussle. She was sure her William would not be the one to be beaten.

I led her away, rather depressed by the automaton performance assigned to me; from which condition I awoke with a touch of horror to find myself paying her very warm compliments; for she had been coquettish and charming to cheer me, and her voice was sweet. We reached a point in our conversation I know not where, but I must have spoken with some warmth. 'Then guess,' said she, 'what William is suffering for your sake now, Harry'; that is, 'suffering in remaining away from me on your account'; and thus, in an instant, with a skill

so intuitive as to be almost unconscious, she twirled me round to a right sense of my position, and set me reflecting, whether a love that clad me in such imperfect armour as to leave me penetrable to these feminine graces—a plump figure, swinging skirts, dewy dark eyelids, laughing red lips—could indeed be absolute love. And if it was not love of the immortal kind, what was I? I looked back on the thought like the ship on its furrow through the waters, and saw every mortal perplexity, and death under. My love of Ottilia delusion? Then life was delusion! I contemplated Julia in alarm, somewhat in the light fair witches were looked on when the faggots were piled for them. The sense of her unholy attractions abased and mortified me: and it set me thinking on the strangeness of my disregard of Mlle. Jenny Chassediane when in Germany, who was far sprightlier, if not prettier, and, as I remembered, had done me the favour to make discreet play with her eyelids in our encounters, and long eyes in passing. I caught myself regretting my coldness of that period; for which regrets I could have swung the scourge upon my miserable flesh. Ottilia's features seemed dying out of my mind. 'Poor darling Harry!' Julia sighed. 'And d' ye know, the sight of a young man far gone in love gives me the trembles?' I rallied her concerning the ladder scene in my old schooldays, and the tender things she had uttered to Heriot. She answered, 'Oh! I think I got them out of poats and chapters about love-making, or I felt it very much. And that 's what I miss in William; he can't talk soft nice nonsense. I believe him, he would if he could, but he 's like a lion of the desert—it 's a roar!'

I rejoiced when we heard the roar. Captain Bulsted returned to take command of his ship, not sooner than I wanted him, and told us of a fierce tussle with the squire. He had stuck to him all day, and up to 11 P.M. 'By

George ! Harry, he had to make humble excuses to dodge out of eyeshot a minute. Conquered him over the fourth bottle ! And now all 's right. He 'll see your dad. " In a barn ? " says the squire. " Here 's to your better health, sir," I bowed to him ; " gentlemen don't meet in barns ; none but mice and traps make appointments there." To shorten my story, my lad, I have arranged for the squire and your excellent progenitor to meet at Bulsted : we may end by bringing them over a bottle of old Greg's best. " See the boy's father," I kept on insisting. The point is, that this confounded book must be off your shoulders, my lad. A dirty dog may wash in a duck-pond. You see, Harry, the dear old squire may set up your account twenty times over, but he has a right to know how you twirl the coin. He says you don't supply the information. I suggest to him that your father can, and will. So we get them into a room together. I 'll be answerable for the rest. And now top your boom, and to bed here : off in the morning and tug the big vessel into port here ! And, Harry, three cheers, and another bottle to crown the victory, if you 're the man for it ? '

Julia interposed a decided negative to the proposal ; an ordinarily unlucky thing to do with bibulous husbands, and the captain looked uncomfortably checked ; but when he seemed to be collecting to assert himself, the humour of her remark, ' Now, no bravado, William,' disarmed him.

' Bravado, my sweet chuck ? '

' Won't another bottle be like flashing your sword after you 've won the day ? ' said she.

He slung his arm round her, and sent a tremendous whisper into my ear—' A perfect angel ! '

I started for London next day, more troubled æsthetically regarding the effect produced on me by this order

of perfect angels than practically anxious about material affairs, though it is true that when I came into proximity with my father, the thought of his all but purely mechanical power of making money spin, fly, and vanish, like sparks from a fire-engine, awakened a serious disposition in me to bring our monetary partnership to some definite settlement. He was living in splendour, next door but one to the grand establishment he had driven me to from Dipwell in the old days, with Mrs. Waddy for his housekeeper once more, Alphonse for his cook. Not living on the same scale, however, the troubled woman said. She signified that it was now the whirlwind. I could not help smiling to see how proud she was of him, nevertheless, as a god-like charioteer — in pace, at least.

'Opera to-night,' she answered my inquiries for him, admonishing me by her tone that I ought not to be behindhand in knowing his regal rules and habits. Praising his generosity, she informed me that he had spent one hundred pounds, and offered a reward of five times the sum, for the discovery of Mabel Sweetwinter. 'Your papa never does things by halves, Mr. Harry!' Soon after she was whimpering, 'Oh, will it last?' I was shown into the room called 'The princess's room,' a miracle of furniture, not likely to be occupied by her, I thought, the very magnificence of the apartment striking down hope in my heart like cold on a nerve. 'Your papa says the whole house is to be for you, Mr. Harry, when the happy day comes.' Could it possibly be that he had talked of the princess? I took a hasty meal and fortified myself with claret to have matters clear with him before the night was over.

CHAPTER XXXIX

I SEE MY FATHER TAKING THE TIDE AND AM CARRIED ON IT MYSELF

My father stood in the lobby of the Opera, holding a sort of open court, it appeared to me, for a cluster of gentlemen hung round him ; and I had presently to bow to greetings which were rather of a kind to flatter me, leading me to presume that he was respected as well as marvelled at. The names of Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn, Mr. Jennings, Lord Alton, Sir Weeton Slater, Mr. Monterez Williams, Admiral Loftus, the Earl of Witlington, were among those which struck my ear, and struck me as good ones. I could not perceive anything of the air of cynical satellites in these gentlemen—on the contrary, they were cordially deferential. I felt that he was encompassed by undoubted gentlemen, and my warmer feelings to my father returned when I became sensible of the pleasant sway he held over the circle, both in speaking and listening. His sympathetic smile and semi-droop of attention ; his readiness, when occasion demanded it, to hit the key of the subject and help it on with the right word ; his air of unobtrusive appreciation ; his sensibility to the moment when the run of conversation depended upon him—showed inimitable art coming of natural genius ; and he did not lose a shade of his superior manner the while. Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn, professionally voluble, a lively talker, brimming with anecdote, but too sparkling, too prompt, too full of personal relish of his point, threw my father's urbane supremacy into marked relief ; and so in another fashion did the Earl of Witlington, ' a youth in the season of guffaws,' as Jorian DeWitt described

him, whom a jest would seize by the throat, shaking his sapling frame. Jorian strolled up to us goutily. No efforts of my father's would induce him to illustrate his fame for repartee, so it remained established. 'Very pretty waxwork,' he said to me of our English beauties swimming by. 'Now, those women, young Richmond, if they were inflammable to the fiftieth degree, that is, if they had the fiftieth part of a Frenchwoman in them, would have canvassed society on the great man's account long before this, and sent him to the top like a bubble. He wastes his time on them. That fat woman he 's bowing to is Viscountess Sedley, a porcine empress, widow of three, with a soupçon of bigamy to flavour them. She mounted from a grocer's shop, I am told. Constitution has done everything for that woman. So it will everywhere—it beats the world! Now he 's on all-fours to Lady Rachel Stokes, our pure aristocracy; she walks as if she were going through a doorway, and couldn't risk an eyelid. I 'd like to see her tempting St. Anthony. That 's little Wreckham's wife: she 's had as many adventures as Gil Blas before he entered the Duke of Lerma's service.' He reviewed several ladies, certainly not very witty when malignant, as I remembered my father to have said of him. 'The style of your Englishwoman is to keep the nose exactly at one elevation, to show you 're born to it. They daren't run a gamut, these women. These Englishwomen are a fiction! The model of them is the nursery-miss, but they 're like the names of true lovers cut on the bark of a tree—awfully stiff and longitudinal with the advance of time. We 've our Lady Jezebels, my boy! They 're in the pay of the bishops, or the police, to make vice hideous. The rest do the same for virtue, and get their pay for it somewhere, I don't doubt; perhaps from the newspapers, to keep up the fiction. I tell you, these Englishwomen have either no

life at all in them, or they 're nothing but animal life. 'Gad, how they dizen themselves ! They 've no other use for their fingers. The wealth of this country 's frightful ! '

Jorian seemed annoyed that he could not excite me to defend my countrywomen ; but I had begun to see that there was no necessity for the sanguine to encounter the bilious on their behalf, and was myself inclined to be critical. Besides I was engaged in watching my father, whose bearing toward the ladies he accosted did not dissatisfy my critical taste, though I had repeated fears of seeing him overdo it. He summoned me to an introduction to the Countess Szezedy, a merry little Hungarian dame.

' So,' said she at once, speaking German, ' you are to marry the romantic head, the Princess Ottilia of Eppenwelzen ! I know her well. I have met her in Vienna. Schöne Seele, and bas bleu ! It 's just those that are won with a duel. I know Prince Otto too.' She prattled away, and asked me whether the marriage was to take place in the Summer. I was too astounded to answer.

' No date is yet fixed,' my father struck in.

' It 's the talk of London,' she said.

Before I could demand explanations of my father with regard to this terrible rumour involving Ottilia, I found myself in the box of the City widow, Lady Sampleman, a grievous person, of the complexion of the autumnal bramble-leaf, whose first words were : ' Ah ! the young suitor ! And how is our German princess ? ' I had to reply that the theme was more of German princes than princesses in England. ' Oh ! but,' said she, ' you are having a—shall I call it—national revenge on them ? " I will take one of your princesses," says you ; and as soon as said done ! I 'm dying for a sight of her portrait. Captain DeWitt declares her heavenly—I mean, he says

she is fair and nice, quite a lady—that of course! And never mind her not being rich. *You* can do the decoration to the match. H'm,' she perused my features; 'pale! Lovelorn? Excuse an old friend of your father's. One of his very oldest, I 'd say, if it didn't impugn. As such, proud of your alliance. I am. I speak of it everywhere —everywhere.'

Here she dramatized the circulation of the gossip. 'Have you heard the news? No, what? Fitz-George's son marries a princess of the German realm. Indeed! True as gospel. And how soon? In a month; and now you will see the dear, neglected man command the Court. . . .'

I looked at my father: I felt stifling with confusion and rage. He leant over to her, imparting some ecstatic news about a great lady having determined to call on her to regulate the affairs of an approaching grand Ball, and under cover of this we escaped.

'If it were not,' said he, 'for the Chassediane—you are aware, Richie, poor Jorian is lost to her?—he has fallen at her quicksilver feet. She is now in London. Half the poor fellow's income expended in bouquets! Her portrait, in the character of the widow Lefourbe, has become a part of his dressing apparatus; he shaves fronting her play-bill. His first real affaire de cœur, and he is forty-five! So he is taken in the stomach. That is why love is such a dangerous malady for middle age. As I said, but for Jenny Chassediane, our Sampleman would be the fortune for Jorian. I have hinted it on both sides. Women, Richie, are cleverer than the illustrious Lord Nelson in not seeing what their inclinations decline to see, and Jorian would do me any service in the world except that one. You are restless, my son?'

I begged permission to quit the house, and wait for him outside. He, in return, begged me most urgently to allow

myself to be introduced to Lady Edbury, the stepmother of Lord Destrier, now Marquis of Edbury; and, using conversational pressure, he adjured me not to slight this lady, adding, with more significance than the words conveyed, 'I am taking the tide, Richie.' The tide took me, and I bowed to a lady of impressive languor, pale and young, with pleasant manners, showing her character in outline, like a glove on the hand, but little of its quality. She accused my father of coming direct from 'that person's' box. He replied that he never forsook old friends. 'You should,' was her rejoinder. It suggested to me an image of one of the sister Fates cutting a thread.

My heart sank when, from Lady Edbury too, I heard the allusion to Germany and its princess. 'Some one told me she was dark?'

'Blonde,' my father corrected the report.

Lady Edbury 'thought it singular for a German woman of the Blood to be a brunette. They had not much dark mixture among them, particularly in the North. Her name? She had forgotten the name of the princess.'

My father repeated: 'The Princess Ottilia, Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld.'

'Brunette, you say?'

'The purest blonde.'

'A complexion?'

'A complexion to dazzle the righteous!'

Lady Edbury threw a flying glance in a mirror: 'The unrighteous you leave to us then?'

They bandied the weariful shuttlecock of gallantry. I bowed and fled. My excuse was that I had seen Anna Penrhys in an upper tier of boxes, and I made my way to her, doubting how I should be welcomed. 'The happy woman is a German princess, we hear!' she set me shivering. Her welcome was perfectly unreserved and friendly.

She asked the name of the lady whose box I had quitted, and after bending her opera-glass on it for a moment, said, with a certain air of satisfaction, 'She is young'; which led me to guess that Lady Edbury was reputed to be Anna's successor; but why the latter should be flattered by the former's youth was one of the mysteries for me then. Her aunt was awakened from sleep by the mention of my name. 'Is the man here?' she exclaimed, starting. Anna smiled, and talked to me of my father, saying, that she was glad to see me at his right hand, for he had a hard battle to fight. She spoke of him with affectionate interest in his fortunes; no better proof of his generosity as well as hers could have been given me. I promised her heartily I would not be guilty of letting our intimacy drop, and handed the ladies down to the crush-room, where I saw my father leading Lady Edbury to her carriage, much observed. Destrier, the young marquis, coming in to meet the procession from other haunts, linked his arm to his friend Witlington's, and said something in my hearing of old 'Duke Fitz,' which provoked, I fancied, signs of amusement equivalent to tittering in a small ring of the select assembly. Lady Sampleman's carriage was called. 'Another victim,' said a voice. Anna Penrhys walked straight out to find her footman and carriage for herself.

I stood alone in the street, wondering, fretting, filled with a variety of ugly sensations, when my father joined me humming an air of the opera. 'I was looking for Jorian, Richie. He had our Sampleman under his charge. He is off to the Chassediane. Well! And well, Richie, you could not bear the absence from your dada? You find me in full sail on the tide. I am at home, if our fortunes demand it, in a little German principality, but there is,' he threw out his chest, 'a breadth in London; nowhere else do I breathe with absolute freedom—so

largely : and this is my battlefield. By the way, Lady Edbury accounts you complete ; which is no more to say than that she is a woman of taste. The instance : she positively would not notice that you wear a dress-coat of a foreign cut. Correct it to-morrow ; my tailor shall wait on you. I meant to point out to you that when a London woman has not taken note of that, the face and the man have made the right impression on her. Richie, dear boy, how shall I speak the delight I have in seeing you ! My arm in yours, old Richie ! strolling home from the Fashion : this seems to me what I dreamt of ! All in sound health at the Grange ? She too, the best of women ? '

' I have come on very particular business,' I interposed briefly.

He replied, ' I am alive to you, Richie ; speak.'

' The squire has seen my bankers' book. He thinks I 've been drawing rather wildly : no doubt he 's right. He wants some sort of explanation. He consents to an interview with you. I have come to ask you to go down to him, sir.'

' To-morrow morning, without an hour's delay, my dear boy. Very agreeable will be the sight of old Riversley. And in the daylight ! '

' He prefers to meet you at Bulsted. Captain Bulsted offers his house for the purpose. I have to warn you, sir, that we stand in a very exceptional position. The squire insists upon having a full account of the money rendered to him.'

' I invite him to London, Richie. I refer him to Dettermain and Newson. I request him to compute the value of a princess.'

' You are aware that he will not come to your invitation.'

' Tell me, then, how is he to understand what I have

established by the expenditure, my son ? I refer him to Dettermain and Newson.'

'But you must know that he sets his face against legal proceedings involving exposure.'

'But surely, Richie, exposure is the very thing we court. The innocent, the unjustly treated, court it. We *would* be talked about ; you *shall* hear of us ! And into the bargain an hereditary princess. Upon my faith, Mr. Beltham, I think you have mighty little to complain of.'

My temper was beginning to chafe at the curb. 'As regards any feeling about the money, personally, sir, you know I have none. But I must speak of one thing. I have heard to-night, I confess with as much astonishment as grief, the name . . . I could not have guessed that I should hear the princess's name associated with mine, and quite openly.'

'As a matter of course.' He nodded, and struck out a hand in wavy motion.

'Well, sir, if you can't feel for her or her family, be good enough to think of me, and remember that I object to it.'

'For you all,' said he, buoyantly ; 'I feel for you all, and I will act for you all. I bring the princess to your arms, my dear boy. You have written me word that the squire gives her a royal dowry—have you not ? My combinations permit of no escape to any one of you. Nay, 'tis done. I think for you—I feel for you—I act for you. By heaven, you shall be happy ! Sigh, Richie, sigh ; your destiny is now entrusted to me ! '

'I daresay I 'm wasting my breath, sir, but I protest against false pretences. You know well that you have made use of the princess's name for your own purposes.'

'Most indubitably, Richie, I have ; and are they not yours ? I must have social authority to succeed in our

main enterprise. Possibly the princess's name serves for a temporary chandelier to cast light on us. She belongs to us. For her sake, we are bringing the house she enters into order. Thus, Richie, I could tell Mr. Beltham : you and he supply the money, the princess the name, and I the energy, the skilfulness, and the estimable cause. I pay the princess for the use of her name with the dowry, which is royal ; I pay you with the princess, who is royal too ; and I, Richie, am paid by your happiness most royally. Together, it is past contest that we win.—Here, my little one,' he said to a woman, and dropped a piece of gold into her hand, ' on condition that you go straight home.' The woman thanked him and promised.—' As I was observing, we are in the very tide of success. Curious ! I have a slight inclination to melancholy. Success, quotha ? Why, hundreds before us have paced the identical way homeward at night under these lamps between the mansions and the park. The bare thought makes them resemble a double line of undertakers. The tomb is down there at the end of them—costly or not. At the age of four, on my birthday, I was informed that my mother lay dead in her bed. I remember to this day my astonishment at her not moving. " Her heart is broken," my old nurse said. To me she appeared intact. Her sister took possession of me, and of her papers, and the wedding-ring—now in the custody of Dettermain and Newson—together with the portraits of both my parents ; and she, poor soul, to sustain me, as I verily believe—she had a great idea of my never asking unprofitably for anything in life—bartered the most corroborative of the testificatory documents, which would now make the establishment of my case a comparatively light task. Have I never spoken to you of my boyhood ? My maternal uncle was a singing-master and master of elocution. I am indebted to him for the

cultivation of my voice. He taught me an effective delivery of my sentences. The English of a book of his called *The Speaker* is still to my mind a model of elegance. Remittances of money came to him from an unknown quarter ; and, with a break or two, have come ever since up to this period. My old nurse—heaven bless her—resumed the occupation of washing. I have stood by her tub, Richie, blowing bubbles and listening to her prophecies of my exalted fortune for hours. On my honour, I doubt, I seriously doubt, if I have ever been happier. I depend just now—I have to avow it to you—slightly upon stimulants . . . of a perfectly innocuous character. Mrs. Waddy will allow me a pint of champagne. The truth is, Richie—you see these two or three poor pensioners of mine, honi soit qui mal y pense—my mother has had hard names thrown at her. The stones of these streets cry out to me to have her vindicated. I am not tired ; but I want my wine.'

He repeated several times before he reached his house-door, that he wanted his wine, in a manner to be almost alarming. His unwonted effort of memory, the singular pictures of him which it had flashed before me, and a sort of impatient compassion, made me forget my wrath. I saw him take his restorative at one draught. He lay down on a sofa, and his valet drew his boots off and threw a cloak over him. Lying there, he wished me gaily good-night. Mrs. Waddy told me that he had adopted this system of sleeping for the last month. 'Bless you, as many people call on him at night now as in the day,' she said ; and I was induced to suppose he had some connection with the Press. She had implicit faith in his powers of constitution, and would affirm, that he had been the death of dozens whom the attraction had duped to imitate his habits. 'He is now a Field-Marshal on his campaign.' She betrayed a twinkle of humour. He

must himself have favoured her with that remark. The report of the house-door frequently shutting in the night suggested the passage of his aides-de-camp.

Early in the morning, I found him pacing through the open doors of the dining-room and the library dictating to a secretary at a desk, now and then tossing a word to Dettermain and Newson's chief clerk. The floor was strewn with journals. He wore Hessian boots; a voluminous black cloak hung loosely from his shoulders.

'I am just settling the evening papers,' he said after greeting me, with a show of formality in his warmth; and immediately added, 'That will do, Mr. Jopson. Put in a note—"Mr. Harry Lepel Richmond of Riversley and Twn-y-glas, my son, takes no step to official distinction in his native land save through the ordinary Parliamentary channels." Your pardon, Richie; presently. I am replying to a morning paper.'

'What 's this? Why print my name?' I cried.

'Merely the correction of an error. I have to insist, my dear boy, that *you* claim no privileges: you are apart from them. Mr. Jopson, I beseech you, not a minute's delay in delivering that. Fetch me from the printer's my pamphlet this afternoon. Mr. Jacobs, my compliments to Dettermain and Newson: I request them to open proceedings instanter, and let the world know of it. Good-morning, gentlemen.'

And now, turning to me, my father fenced me with the whole weight of his sententious volubility, which was the force of a river. Why did my name appear in the papers? Because I was his son. But he assured me that he carefully separated me from public companionship with his fortunes, and placed me on the side of my grandfather, as a plain gentleman of England, the heir of the most colossal wealth possible in the country.

'I *dis*-sociate you from me, Richie, do you see? I

cause it to be declared that you need, on no account, lean on me. Jopson will bring you my pamphlet—my Declaration of Rights—to peruse. In the Press, in Literature, at Law, and on social ground, I meet the enemy, and I claim my own ; by heaven, I do ! And I will down to the squire for a distraction, if you esteem it necessary, certainly. Half-a-dozen words to him. Why, do you maintain him to be insensible to a title for you ? No, no. And ask my friends. I refer him to any dozen of my friends to convince him I have the prize almost in my possession. Why, dear boy, I have witnesses, living witnesses, to the ceremony. Am I, tell me, to be deprived of money now, once again, for the eleventh time ? Oh ! And put aside my duty to you, I protest I am bound in duty to her who bore me—you have seen her miniature : how lovely that dear woman was ! how gentle !—bound in duty to her to clear her good name. This does not affect you . . .'

'Oh, but it does,' he allowed me to plead.

'Ay, through your love for your dada.'

He shook me by both hands. I was touched with pity, and at the same time in doubt whether it was not an actor that swayed me ; for I was discontented, and could not speak my discontent ; I was overborne, overflowed. His evasion of the matter of my objections relating to the princess I felt to be a palpable piece of artfulness, but I had to acknowledge to myself that I knew what his argument would be, and how overwhelmingly his defence of it would spring forth. My cowardice shrank from provoking a recurrence to the theme. In fact, I submitted consciously to his masterful fluency and emotional power, and so I was carried on the tide with him, remaining in London several days to witness that I was not the only one. My father, admitting that money served him in his conquest of society, and defying any other man to

do as much with it as he did, replied to a desperate insinuation of mine, 'This money I spend I am actually putting out to interest as much as, or more than, your grandad.' He murmured confidentially, 'I have alarmed the Government. Indeed, I have warrant for saying I am in communication with its agents. They are bribing me; they are positively bribing me, Richie. I receive my stipend annually. They are mighty discreet. So am I. But I push them hard. I take what they offer: I renounce none of my claims.'

Janet wrote that it would be prudent for me to return.

'I am prepared,' my father said. 'I have only to meet Mr. Beltham in a room—I stipulate that it shall be between square walls—to win him. The squire to back us, Richie, we have command of the entire world. His wealth, and my good cause, and your illustrious union—by the way, it is announced definitely in this morning's paper.'

Dismayed, I asked what was announced.

'Read,' said he. 'This will be something to hand to Mr. Beltham at our meeting. I might trace it to one of the embassies, Imperial or Royal. No matter—there it is.'

I read a paragraph in which Ottilia's name and titles were set down; then followed mine and my wealthy heirship, and—woe was me in the perusing of it!—a roundabout vindication of me as one not likely to be ranked as the first of English commoners who had gained the hand of an hereditary foreign princess, though it was undoubtedly in the light of a commoner that I was most open to the congratulations of my countrymen upon my unparalleled felicity. A display of historical erudition cited the noble inferiors by birth who had caught princesses to their arms—Charles, Humphrey, William, John. Under this list, a later Harry!

The paragraph closed by fixing the nuptials to take place before the end of the Season.

I looked at my father to try a struggle with him. The whole man was efflorescent.

'Can't it be stopped?' I implored him.

He signified the impossibility in a burst of gesticulations, motions of the mouth, smiling frowns; various patterns of an absolute negative beating down opposition.

'Things printed can never be stopped, Richie. Our Jorian compares them to babies baptized. They have a soul from that moment, and go on for ever!—an admirable word of Jorian's. And a word to you, Richie. Will you swear to me by the veracity of your lover's heart, that paragraph affords you no satisfaction? He cannot swear it!' my father exclaimed, seeing me swing my shoulder round, and he made me feel that it would have been a false oath if I had sworn it. But I could have sworn, that I had rather we two were at the bottom of the sea than that it should come under the princess's eyes. I read it again. It was in print. It looked like reality. It was at least the realization of my dream. But this played traitor and accused me of being crowned with no more than a dream. The sole practical thing I could do was to insist on our starting for Riversley immediately, to make sure of my own position. 'Name your hour, Richie,' my father said confidently: and we waited.

A rather plainer view of my father's position, as I inclined to think, was afforded to me one morning at his breakfast-table, by a conversation between him and Jorian DeWitt, who brought me a twisted pink note from Mlle. Chassediane, the which he delivered with the air of a dog made to disgorge a bone, and he was very cool to me indeed. The cutlets of Alphonse were subject to snappish criticism. 'I assume,' he said, 'the fellow knew I was coming?'

'He saw it in my handwriting of yesterday,' replied my father. 'But be just to him, acknowledge that he is one of the few that perform their daily duties with a tender conscience.'

'This English climate has bedevilled the fellow! He peppers his dishes like a mongrel Indian reared on mangoes.'

'Ring him up, ring him up, Jorian. All I beg of you is not to disgust him with life, for he quits any service in the world to come to me, and, in fact, he suits me.'

'Exactly so: you spoil him.'

My father shrugged. 'The state of the case is, that your stomach is growing delicate, friend Jorian.'

'The actual state of the case being, that my palate was never keener, and consequently my stomach knows its business.'

'You should have tried the cold turbot with oil and capers.'

'Your man had better stick to buttered eggs, in my opinion.'

'Say, porridge!'

'No, I 'll be hanged if I think he 's equal to a bowl of porridge.'

'Carème might have confessed to the same!'

'With this difference,' cried Jorian in a heat, 'that he would never have allowed the thought of any of your barbarous messes to occur to a man at table. Let me tell you, Roy, you astonish me: up till now I have never known you guilty of the bad taste of defending a bad dish on your own board.'

'Then you will the more readily pardon me, Jorian.'

'Oh, I *pardon* you,' Jorian sneered, tripped to the carpet by such ignoble mildness. 'A breakfast is no great loss.'

My father assured him he would have a serious

conversation with Alphonse, for whom he apologized by saying that Alphonse had not, to his knowledge, served as hospital cook anywhere, and was therefore quite possibly not sufficiently solicitous for appetites and digestions of invalids.

Jorian threw back his head as though to discharge a spiteful sarcasm with good aim; but turning to me, said, 'Harry, the thing must be done; your father must marry. Notoriety is the season for a pick and choice of the wealthiest and the loveliest. I refuse to act the part of warming-pan any longer; I refuse point blank. It 's not a personal feeling on my part; my advice is that of a disinterested friend, and I tell you candidly, Roy, set aside the absurd exhibition of my dancing attendance on that last rose of Guildhall,—egad, the alderman went like Summer, and left us the very picture of a fruity Autumn,—I say you can't keep her hanging on the tree of fond expectation for ever. She 'll drop.'

'Catch her, Jorian; you are on guard.'

'Upwards of three hundred thousand, if a penny, Roy Richmond! Who? I? I am not a fortune-hunter.'

'Nor am I, friend Jorian.'

'No, it 's because you 're not thorough: you 'll fall between the stools.'

My father remarked that he should visit this upon Mr. Alphonse.

'You shook off that fine Welsh girl, and she was in your hand—the act of a madman!' Jorian continued. 'You 're getting older: the day will come when you 're a flat excitement. You know the first Lady Edbury spoilt one of your best chances when you had the market. Now you 're trifling with the second. She 's the head of the Light Brigade, but you might fix her down, if she 's not too much in debt. You 're not at the end of your run, I dare say. Only, my good Roy, let me tell you, in

life you mustn't wait for the prize of the race till you touch the goal—if you prefer metaphor. You generally come forward about every seven years or so. Add on another seven, and women 'll begin to think. You can't beat Time, mon Roy.'

'So,' said my father, 'I touch the goal, and women begin to think, and I can't beat time to them. Jorian, your mind is in a state of confusion. I do not marry.'

'Then, Roy Richmond, hear what a friend says . . .'

'I do not marry, Jorian, and you know my reasons.'

'Sentiments ! '

'They are a part of my life.'

'Just as I remarked, you are not thorough. You have genius and courage out of proportion, and you are a dead failure, Roy ; because, no sooner have you got all Covent Garden before you for the fourth or fifth time, than in go your hands into your pockets, and you say—No, there 's an apple I can't have, so I 'll none of these ; and, by the way, the apple must be tolerably withered by this time. And you know perfectly well (for you don't lack common sense at a shaking, Roy Richmond), that you 're guilty of simple madness in refusing to make the best of your situation. You haven't to be taught what money means. With money—and a wife to take care of it, mind you—you are pre-eminently the man for which you want to be recognized. Without it—Harry 'll excuse me, I must speak plainly—you 're a sort of a spectacle of a bob-cherry, down on your luck, up on your luck, and getting dead stale and never bitten ; a familiar curiosity ' : Jorian added, ' Oh, by Jove ! it 's not nice to think of.'

My father said : ' Harry, I am sure, will excuse you for talking, in your extreme friendliness, of matters that he and I have not—and they interest us deeply—yet thought fit to discuss. And you may take my word for it, Jorian, that I will give Alphonse his medical dose. I am quite of

your opinion that the kings of cooks require it occasionally. Harry will inform us of Mlle. Chassediane's commands.'

The contents of the letter permitted me to read it aloud. She desired to know how she could be amused on the Sunday.

'We will undertake it,' said my father. 'I depute the arrangements to you, Jorian. Respect the prejudices, and avoid collisions, that is all.'

Captain DeWitt became by convenient stages cheerful, after the pink slip of paper had been made common property, and from a seriously-advising friend, in his state of spite, relapsed to the idle and shadow-like associate, when pleased. I had to thank him for the gift of fresh perceptions. Surely it would be as well if my father could get a woman of fortune to take care of him!

We had at my request a consultation with Dettermain and Newson on the eve of the journey to Riversley, Temple and Jorian DeWitt assisting. Strange documentary evidence was unfolded and compared with the date of a royal decree: affidavits of persons now dead; a ring, *the* ring; fans, and lace, and handkerchiefs with notable initials; jewelry stamped 'To the Divine Anastasia' from an adoring Christian name: old brown letters that shrieked 'wife' when 'charmer' seemed to have palled; oaths of fidelity ran through them like bass notes. Jorian held up the discoloured sheets of ancient paper saying: 'Here you behold the mummy of the villain Love.' Such love as it was—the love of the privileged butcher for the lamb. The burden of the letters, put in epigram, was rattlesnake and bird. A narrative of Anastasia's sister, Elizabeth, signed and sealed, with names of witnesses appended, related in brief bald English the history of the events which had killed her. It warmed pathetically when dwelling on the writer's necessity to

part with letters and papers of greater moment, that she might be enabled to sustain and educate her sister's child. She named the certificate; she swore to the tampering with witnesses. The number and exact indication of the house where the ceremony took place was stated—a house in Soho;—the date was given, and the incident on that night of the rape of the beautiful Miss Armett by mad Lord Beaumaris at the theatre doors, aided by masked ruffians, after Anastasia's performance of Zamira.

'There are witnesses I know to be still living, Mr. Temple,' my father said, seeing the young student-at-law silent and observant. 'One of them I have under my hand; I feed him. Listen to this.'

He read two or three insufferable sentences from one of the love-epistles, and broke down. I was ushered aside by a member of the firm to inspect an instrument prepared to bind me as surety for the costs of the appeal. I signed it. We quitted the attorney's office convinced (I speak of Temple and myself) that we had seen the shadow of something.

CHAPTER XL

MY FATHER'S MEETING WITH MY GRANDFATHER

My father's pleasure on the day of our journey to Bulsted was to drive me out of London on a lofty open chariot, with which he made the circuit of the fashionable districts, and caused innumerable heads to turn. I would have preferred to go the way of other men, to be unnoticed, but I was subject to an occasional glowing of undefined satisfaction in the observance of the universally acknowledged harmony existing between his pretensions,

his tastes and habits, and his person. He contrived by I know not what persuasiveness and simplicity of manner and speech to banish from me the idea that he was engaged in playing a high stake; and though I knew it, and he more than once admitted it, there was an ease and mastery about him that afforded me some degree of positive comfort still. I was still most securely attached to his fortunes. Supposing the ghost of dead Hector to have hung over his body when the inflamed son of Peleus whirled him at his chariot wheels round Troy, he would, with his natural passions sobered by Erebus, have had some of my reflections upon force and fate, and my partial sense of exhilaration in the tremendous speed of the course during the whole of the period my father termed his Grand Parade. I showed just such acquiescence or resistance as were superinduced by the variations of the ground. Otherwise I was spell-bound; and beyond interdicting any further public mention of my name or the princess's, I did nothing to thwart him. It would have been no light matter.

We struck a station at a point half-way down to Bulsted, and found little Kiomi there, thunder in her brows, carrying a bundle, and purchasing a railway-ticket, not to travel in our direction. She gave me the singular answer that she could not tell me where her people were; nor would she tell me whither she was going, alone, and by rail. I chanced to speak of Heriot. One of her sheet-lightning flashes shot out. 'He won't be at Bulsted,' she said, as if that had a significance. I let her know we were invited to Bulsted. 'Oh, she 's at home'; Kiomi blinked, and her features twitched like whip-cord. I saw that she was possessed by one of her furies. That girl's face had the art of making me forget beautiful women, and what beauty was by comparison.

It happened that the squire came across us as we were

rounding the slope of larch and fir plantation near a part of the Riversley hollows, leading to the upper heath-land, where, behind a semicircle of birches, Bulsted lay. He was on horseback, and called hoarsely to the captain's coachman, who was driving us, to pull up. 'Here, Harry,' he sang out to me, in the same rough voice, 'I don't see why we should bother Captain William. It 's a bit of business, not pleasure. I 've got the book in my pocket. You ask—is it convenient to step into my bailiff's cottage hard by, and run through it? Ten minutes 'll tell me all I want to know. I want it done with. Ask.'

My father stood up and bowed, bareheaded.

My grandfather struck his hat and bobbed.

'Mr. Beltham, I trust I see you well.'

'Better, sir, when I 've got rid of a damned unpleasant bit o' business.'

'I offer you my hearty assistance.'

'Do you? Then step down and come into my bailiff's.'

'I come, sir.'

My father alighted from the carriage. The squire cast his gouty leg to be quit of his horse, but not in time to check my father's advances and ejaculations of condolence.

'Gout, Mr. Beltham, is a little too much a proof to *us* of a long line of ancestry.'

His hand and arm were raised in the form of a splint to support the squire, who glared back over his cheek-bone, horrified that he could not escape the contact, and in too great pain from arthritic throes to protest: he resembled a burglar surprised by justice. 'What infernal nonsense . . . fellow talking now?' I heard him mutter between his hoppings and dancings, with one foot in the stirrup and a toe to earth, the enemy at his heel, and his inclination half bent upon swinging to the saddle again.

I went to relieve him. 'Damn! . . . Oh, it 's you,' said he.

The squire directed Uberly, acting as his groom, to walk his horse up and down the turf fronting young Tom Eckerthy's cottage, and me to remain where I was; then hobbled up to the door, followed at a leisurely march by my father. The door opened. My father swept the old man in before him, with a bow and flourish that admitted of no contradiction, and the door closed on them. I caught a glimpse of Uberly screwing his wrinkles in a queer grimace, while he worked his left eye and thumb expressively at the cottage, by way of communicating his mind to Samuel, Captain Bulsted's coachman; and I became quite of his opinion as to the nature of the meeting, that it was comical and not likely to lead to much. I thought of the princess and of my hope of her depending upon such an interview as this. From that hour when I stepped on the sands of the Continent to the day of my quitting them, I had been folded in a dream: I had stretched my hands to the highest things of earth, and here now was the retributive material money-question, like a keen scythe-blade!

The cottage-door continued shut. The heaths were darkening. I heard a noise of wheels, and presently the unmistakable voice of Janet saying, 'That must be Harry.' She was driving my aunt Dorothy. Both of them hushed at hearing that the momentous duel was in progress. Janet's first thought was of the squire. 'I won't have him ride home in the dark,' she said, and ordered Uberly to walk the horse home. The ladies had a ladies' altercation before Janet would permit my aunt to yield her place and proceed on foot, accompanied by me. Naturally the best driver of the two kept the whip. I told Samuel to go on to Bulsted, with word that we were coming: and Janet, nodding bluntly, agreed to direct

my father as to where he might expect to find me on the Riversley road. My aunt Dorothy and I went ahead slowly : at her request I struck a pathway to avoid the pony-carriage, which was soon audible ; and when Janet, chattering to the squire, had gone by, we turned back to intercept my father. He was speechless at the sight of Dorothy Beltham. At his solicitation, she consented to meet him next day ; his account of the result of the interview was unintelligible to her as well as to me. Even after leaving her at the park-gates, I could get nothing definite from him, save that all was well, and that the squire was eminently practical ; but he believed he had done an excellent evening's work. 'Yes,' said he, rubbing his hands, 'excellent ! making due allowances for the emphatically commoner's mind we have to deal with.' And then to change the subject he dilated on that strange story of the man who, an enormous number of years back in the date of the world's history, carried his little son on his shoulders one night when the winds were not so boisterous, though we were deeper in Winter, along the identical road we traversed, between the gorse-mounds, across the heaths, with yonder remembered fir-tree clump in sight and the waste-water visible to footfarers rounding under the firs. At night-time he vowed, that as far as nature permitted it, he had satisfied the squire—'completely satisfied him, I mean,' he said, to give me sound sleep. 'No doubt of it ; no doubt of it, Richie.'

He won Julia's heart straight off, and Captain Bulsted's profound admiration. 'Now I know the man I 've always been adoring since you were so high, Harry,' said she. Captain Bulsted sighed : 'Your husband bows to your high good taste, my dear.' They relished him sincerely, and between them and him I suffered myself to be dandled once more into a state of credulity, until I saw

my aunt Dorothy in the afternoon subsequent to the appointed meeting. His deep respect and esteem for her had stayed him from answering any of her questions falsely. To that extent he had been veracious. It appeared, that driven hard by the squire, who would have no waving of flags and lighting of fireworks in a matter of business, and whose 'commoner's mind' chafed sturdily at a hint of the necessity for lavish outlays where there was a princess to win, he had rallied on the fiction that many of the cheques, standing for the bulk of the sums expended, were moneys borrowed by him of me, which he designed to repay, and was prepared to repay instantly—could in fact, the squire demanding it, repay, as it were, on the spot; for behold, these borrowed moneys were not spent; they were moneys invested in undertakings, put out to high rates of interest; moneys that perhaps it would not be adviseable to call in without a season of delay; still, if Mr. Beltham, acting for his grandson and heir, insisted, it should be done. The moneys had been borrowed purely to invest them with profit on my behalf: a gentleman's word of honour was pledged to it.

The squire grimly gave him a couple of months to make it good.

Dorothy Beltham and my father were together for about an hour at Eckerthy's farm. She let my father kiss her hand when he was bending to take his farewell of her, but held her face away. He was in manifest distress, hardly master of his voice, begged me to come to him soon, and bowing, with 'God bless you, madam, my friend on earth!' turned his heel, bearing his elastic frame lamentably. A sad or a culprit air did not befit him: one reckoned up his foibles and errors when seeing him under a partly beaten aspect. At least, I did; not my dear aunt, who was compassionate of him, however

thoroughly she condemned his ruinous extravagance, and the shifts and evasions it put him to. She feared, that instead of mending the difficulty, he had postponed merely to exaggerate it in the squire's mind; and she was now of opinion that the bringing him down to meet the squire was very bad policy, likely to result in danger to my happiness; for, if the money should not be forthcoming on the date named, all my father's faults would be transferred to me as his accomplice, both in the original wastefulness and the subterfuges invented to conceal it. I recollected that a sum of money had really been sunk in Prince Ernest's coal-mine. My aunt said she hoped for the best.

Mounting the heaths, we looked back on the long yellow road, where the carriage conveying my father to the railway-station was visible, and talked of him, and of the elements of antique tragedy in his history, which were at that period, let me say, precisely what my incessant mental efforts were strained to expel from the idea of our human life. The individual's freedom was my tenet of faith; but pity pleaded for him that he was well-nigh irresponsible, was shamefully sinned against at his birth, one who could charge the Gods with vindictiveness, and complain of the persecution of natal Furies. My aunt Dorothy advised me to take him under my charge, and sell his house and furniture, make him live in bachelor chambers with his faithful waiting-woman and a single manservant.

'He will want money even to do that,' I remarked.

She murmured, 'Is there not some annual income paid to him?'

Her quick delicacy made her redden in alluding so closely to his personal affairs, and I loved her for the nice feeling. 'It was not much,' I said. The miserable attempt to repair the wrongs done to him with this small annuity angered me; and I remembered, little pleased,

the foolish expectations he founded on this secret acknowledgement of the justice of his claims. 'We won't talk of it,' I pursued. 'I wish he had never touched it. I shall interdict him.'

'You would let him pay his debts with it, Harry?'

'I am not sure, aunty, that he does not incur a greater debt by accepting it.'

'One's wish would be, that he might not ever be in need of it.'

'Ay, or never be caring to find the key of it.'

'That must be waste of time,' she said.

I meant something else, but it was useless to tell her so.

CHAPTER XLI

COMMENCEMENT OF THE SPLENDOURS AND PERPLEXITIES OF MY FATHER'S GRAND PARADE

JANET, in reply to our inquiries as to the condition of the squire's temper, pointed out in the newspaper a notification of a grand public Ball to be given by my father, the first of a series of three, and said that the squire had seen it and shrugged. She thought there was no positive cause for alarm, even though my father should fail of his word; but expressed her view decidedly, that it was an unfortunate move to bring him between the squire and me, and so she blamed Captain Bulsted. This was partly for the reason that the captain and his wife, charmed by my father, were for advocating his merits at the squire's table: our ingenuity was ludicrously taxed to mystify him on the subject of their extravagant eulogies. They told him they had been invited, and were going to the great London Balls.

'Subscription Balls?' asked the squire.

'No, sir,' rejoined the captain.

'Tradesmen's Balls, d' ye call 'em, then?'

'No, sir; they are Balls given by a distinguished gentleman.'

'Take care it 's not another name for tradesmen's Balls, William.'

'I do not attend tradesmen's Balls, sir.'

'Take care o' that, William.'

The captain was very angry. 'What,' said he, turning to us, 'what does the squire mean by telling an officer of the Royal Navy that he is conducting his wife to a tradesmen's Ball?'

Julia threatened malicious doings for the insult. She and the squire had a controversy upon the explication of the word gentleman, she describing my father's appearance and manners to the life. 'Now listen to me, squire. A gentleman, *I* say, is one you 'd say, if he wasn't born a duke, he ought to have been, and more shame to the title! He turns the key of a lady's heart with a twinkle of his eye. He 's never mean—what he has is yours. He 's a true friend; and if he doesn't keep his word, you know in a jiffy it 's the fault of affairs; and stands about five feet eleven: he 's a full-blown man': and so forth.

The squire listened, and perspired at finding the object of his abhorrence crowned thus in the unassailable realms of the abstract. Julia might have done it more elegantly; but her husband was rapturous over her skill in portraiture, and he added: 'That 's a gentleman, squire; and that 's a man pretty sure to be abused by half the world.'

'Three-quarters, William,' said the squire; 'there 's about the computation for your gentleman's creditors, I suspect.'

'Ay, sir; well,' returned the captain, to whom this

kind of fencing in the dark was an affliction, 'we make it up in quality—in quality.'

'I 'll be bound you do,' said the squire; 'and so you will so long as you 're only asked to dance to the other poor devils' fiddling.'

Captain Bulsted bowed. 'The last word to *you*, squire.'

The squire nodded. 'I 'll hand it to your wife, William.'

Julia took it graciously. 'A perfect gentleman!—perfect! confound his enemies!'

'Why, ma'am, you might keep from swearing,' the squire bawled.

'La! squire,' said she, 'why, don't you know the National Anthem?'

'National Anthem, ma'am! and a fellow, a velvet-tongued—confound *him*, if you like.'

'And where 's my last word, if you please?' Julia jumped up, and dropped a provoking curtsey.

'You silly old grandada!' said Janet, going round to him; 'don't you see the cunning woman wants to dress you in our garments, and means to boast of it to us while you 're finishing your wine?'

The old man fondled her. I could have done the same, she bent over him with such homely sweetness. 'One comfort, *you* won't go to these gingerbread Balls,' he said.

'I 'm not invited,' she moaned comically.

'No; nor shan't be, while I can keep you out of bad company.'

'But, grandada, I do like dancing.'

'Dance away, my dear; I 've no objection.'

'But where 's the music?'

'Oh, you can always have music.'

'But where are my partners?'

The squire pointed at me.

'You don't want more than one at a time, eh?' He corrected his error: 'No, the fellow's engaged in another quadrille. Mind you, Miss Janet, he shall dance to your tune yet. D' ye hear, sir?' The irritation excited by Captain Bulsted and Julia broke out in fury. 'Who 's that fellow danced when Rome was burning?'

'The Emperor Nero,' said Janet. 'He killed Harry's friend Seneca in the eighty-somethingth year of his age; an old man, and—hush, grandada!' She could not check him.

'Hark you, Mr. Harry; dance your hardest up in town with your rips and reps, and the lot of ye; all very fine while the burning goes on: you won't see the fun of dancing on the ashes. A nice king of Rome Nero was next morning! By the Lord, if I couldn't swear you 'll be down on your knees to an innocent fresh-hearted girl 's worth five hundred of the crew you 're for partnering now while you 've a penny for the piper.'

Janet shut his mouth, kissed him, and held his wine up. He drank, and thumped the table. 'We 'll have parties here, too. The girl shall have her choice of partners: she shan't be kept in the background by a young donkey. Take any six of your own age, and six sensible men, to try you by your chances. By George, the whole dozen 'd bring you in non-compos. You 've only got the women on your side because of a smart face and figure.'

Janet exclaimed indignantly, 'Grandada, I 'm offended with you'; and walked out on a high step.

'Come, if he has the women on his side,' said Captain Bulsted, mildly.

'He 'll be able to go partnering and gallopading as long as his banker 'll let him, William—like your gentleman! That 's true. We shall soon see.'

'I leave my character in your hands, sir,' said I, rising. 'If you would scold me in private, I should prefer it, on behalf of your guests; but I am bound to submit to your pleasure, and under any circumstances I remember, what you appear to forget, that you are my grandfather.'

So saying, I followed the ladies. It was not the wisest of speeches, and happened, Captain Bulsted informed me, to be delivered in my father's manner, for the squire pronounced emphatically that he saw very little Beltham in me. The right course would have been for me to ask him then and there whether I had his consent to start for Germany. But I was the sport of resentments and apprehensions; and, indeed, I should not have gone. I could not go without some title beyond that of the heir of great riches.

Janet kept out of my sight. I found myself strangely anxious to console her: less sympathetic, perhaps, than desirous to pour out my sympathy in her ear, which was of a very pretty shape, with a soft unpierced lobe. We danced together at the Riversley Ball, given by the squire on the night of my father's Ball in London. Janet complimented me upon having attained wisdom. 'Now we get on well,' she said. 'Grandada only wants to see us friendly, and feel that I am not neglected.'

The old man, a martyr to what he considered due to his favourite, endured the horror of the Ball until supper-time, and kept his eyes on us two. He forgot, or pretended to forget, my foreign engagement altogether, though the announcement in the newspapers was spoken of by Sir Roderick and Lady Ilchester and others.

'How do you like that?' he remarked to me, seeing her twirled away by one of the young Rubreys.

'She seems to like it, sir,' I replied.

'Like it!' said he. 'In my day you wouldn't have caught me letting the bloom be taken off the girl I

cared for by a parcel o' scampish young dogs. Right in their arms! Look at her build. She 's strong; she 's healthy; she goes round like a tower. If you want a girl to *look* like a princess!——'

His eulogies were not undeserved. But she danced as lightly and happily with Mr. Fred Rubrey as with Harry Richmond. I congratulated myself on her lack of sentiment. Later, when in London, where Mlle. Jenny Chassediane challenged me to perilous sarabandes, I wished that Janet had ever so small a grain of sentiment, for a preservative to me. Ottilia glowed high and distant; she sent me no message; her image did not step between me and disorder. The whole structure of my idea of my superior nature seemed to be crumbling to fragments; and beginning to feel in despair that I was wretchedly like other men, I lost by degrees the sense of my hold on her. It struck me that my worst fears of the effect produced on the princess's mind by that last scene in the lake-palace must be true, and I abandoned hope. Temple thought she tried me too cruelly. Under these circumstances I became less and less resolutely disposed to renew the forlorn conflict with my father concerning his prodigal way of living. 'Let it last as long as I have a penny to support him!' I exclaimed. He said that Dettermain and Newson were now urging on his case with the utmost despatch in order to keep pace with him, but that the case relied for its life on his preserving a great appearance. He handed me his division of our twin cheque-books, telling me he preferred to depend on his son for supplies, and I was in the mood to think this a partial security.

'But you can take what there is,' I said.

'On the contrary, I will accept nothing but minor sums—so to speak, the fractional shillings; though I confess I am always bewildered by silver,' said he.

I questioned him upon his means of carrying on his expenditure. His answer was to refer to the pavement of the city of London. By paying here and there he had, he informed me, made a concrete for the wheels to roll on. He calculated that he now had credit for the space of three new years—ample time for him to fight his fight and win his victory.

'*My* tradesmen are not like the tradesmen of other persons,' he broke out with a curious neigh of supreme satisfaction in that retinue. 'They believe in me. I have de facto harnessed them to my fortunes; and if you doubt me on the point of success, I refer you to Dettermain and Newson. All I stipulate for is to maintain my position in society to throw a lustre on my Case. So much I must do. My failures hitherto have been entirely owing to the fact that I had not my son to stand by me.'

'Then you must have money, sir.'

'Yes, money.'

'Then what can you mean by refusing mine?'

'I admit the necessity for it, my son. Say you hand me a cheque for a temporary thousand. Your credit and mine in conjunction can replace it before the expiration of the two months. Or,' he meditated, 'it might be better to give a bond or so to a professional lender, and preserve the account at your bankers intact. The truth is, I have, in my interview with the squire, drawn in advance upon the material success I have a perfect justification to anticipate, and I cannot allow the old gentleman to suppose that I retrench for the purpose of giving a large array of figures to your bankers' book. It would be sheer madness. I cannot do it. I cannot afford to do it. When you are on a runaway horse,—I prefer to say a racehorse,—Richie, you must *ride* him. You dare not throw up the reins. Only last night

Wedderburn, appealing to Loftus, a practical sailor, was approved when he offered—I forget the subject-matter—the illustration of a ship on a lee-shore ; you are lost if you do not spread every inch of canvas to the gale. Retrenchment at this particular moment is perdition. Count our gains, Richie. We have won a princess . . .'

I called to him not to name her.

He persisted : ' Half a minute. She is won ; she is ours. And let me, in passing,—bear with me one second, —counsel you to write to Prince Ernest instanter, proposing formally for his daughter, and, in your grandfather's name, state her dowry at fifty thousand per annum.'

' Oh, you forget ! ' I interjected.

' No, Richie, I do not forget that you are off a lee-shore ; you are mounted on a skittish racehorse, with, if you like, a New Forest fly operating within an inch of his belly-girths. Our situation is so far ticklish, and prompts invention and audacity.'

' You must forget, sir, that in the present state of the squire's mind, I should be simply lying in writing to the prince that he offers a dowry.'

' No, for your grandfather has yielded consent.'

' By implication, you know he withdraws it.'

' But if I satisfy him that you have not been extravagant ? '

' I must wait till he is satisfied.'

' The thing is done, Richie, done. I see it in advance —it is done ! Whatever befalls me, you, my dear boy, in the space of two months, may grasp your fortune. Besides, here is my hand. I swear by it, my son, that I shall satisfy the squire. I go farther ; I say I shall have the means to refund to you—the means, the money. The marriage is announced in our prints for the Summer —say early June. And I undertake that you, the

husband of the princess, shall be the first gentleman in England—that is, Europe. Oh! not ruling a coterie: not dazzling the world with entertainments.' He thought himself in earnest when he said, 'I attach no mighty importance to these things, though there is no harm I can perceive in leading the fashion—none that I see in having a consummate style. I know your taste, and hers, Richie, the noble lady's. She shall govern the intellectual world—your poets, your painters, your men of science. They *reflect* a beautiful sovereign mistress more exquisitely than almost aristocracy does. But you head our aristocracy also. You are a centre of the political world. So I scheme it. Between you, I defy the Court to rival you. This I call distinction. It is no mean aim, by heaven! I protest, it is an aim with the mark in sight, and not out of range.'

He whipped himself up to one of his oratorical frenzies, of which a cheque was the common fruit. The power of his persuasiveness in speech, backed by the spectacle of his social accomplishments, continued to subdue me, and I protested only inwardly even when I knew that he was gambling with fortune. I wrote out many cheques, and still it appeared to me that they were barely sufficient to meet the current expenses of his household. Temple and I calculated that his Grand Parade would try the income of a duke, and could but be a matter of months. Mention of it reached Riversley from various quarters, from Lady Maria Higginson, from Captain Bulsted and his wife, and from Sir Roderick Ilchester, who said to me, with fine accentuation, 'I have *met* your father.' Sir Roderick, an Englishman reputed of good breeding, informed the son that he had actually met the father in lofty society, at Viscountess Sedley's, at Lady Dolchester's, at Bramham DeWitt's, and heard of him as a frequenter of the Prussian and Austrian Embassy entertainments; and also

that he was admitted to the exclusive dinner-parties of the Countess de Strode, 'which are,' he observed, in the moderated tone of an astonishment devoting itself to propagation, 'the cream of society.' Indubitably, then, my father was an impostor: Society proved it. The squire listened like one pelted by a storm, sure of his day to come at the close of the two months. I gained his commendation by shunning the metropolitan Balls, nor did my father press me to appear at them. It was tacitly understood between us that I should now and then support him at his dinner-table, and pass bowing among the most select of his great ladies. And this I did, and I felt at home with them, though I had to bear with roughnesses from one or two of the more venerable dames, which were not quite proper to good breeding. Old Lady Kane, great-aunt of the Marquis of Edbury, was particularly my tormentor, through her plain-spoken comments on my father's legal suit; for I had to listen to her without wincing, and agree in her general contempt of the Georges, and foil her queries coolly, when I should have liked to perform Jorian DeWitt's expressed wish to 'squeeze the acid out of her in one grip, and toss her to the Gods that collect exhausted lemons.' She took extraordinary liberties with me.

'Why not marry an Englishwoman? Rich young men ought to choose wives from their own people, out of their own sets. Foreign women never get on well in this country, unless they join the hounds to hunt the husband.'

She cited naturalized ladies famous for the pastime. Her world and its outskirts she knew thoroughly, even to the fact of my grandfather's desire that I should marry Janet Ilchester. She named a duke's daughter, an earl's. Of course I should have to stop the scandal: otherwise the choice I had was unrestricted. My father she evidently

disliked, but she just as much disliked an encounter with his invincible bonhomie and dexterous tongue. She hinted at family reasons for being shy of him, assuring me that I was not implicated in them.

'The Guelph pattern was never much to my taste,' she said, and it consoled me with the thought that he was not ranked as an adventurer in the houses he entered. I learned that he was supposed to depend chiefly on my vast resources. Edbury acted the part of informant to the inquisitive harridan: 'Her poor dear good-for-nothing Edbury! whose only cure would be a nice, well-conducted girl, an heiress.' She had cast her eye on Anna Penrhys, but considered her antecedents doubtful. Spotless innocence was the sole receipt for Edbury's malady. My father, in a fit of bold irony, proposed Lady Kane for President of his Tattle and Scandal Club, —a club of ladies dotted with select gentlemen, the idea of which Jorian DeWitt claimed the merit of starting, and my father surrendered it to him, with the reservation, that Jorian intended an association of backbiters pledged to reveal all they knew, whereas the Club, in its present form, was an engine of morality and decency, and a social safeguard, as well as an amusement. It comprised a Committee of Investigation, and a Court of Appeal; its object was to arraign slander. Lady Kane declined the honour. 'I am not a washerwoman,' she said to me, and spoke of where dirty linen should be washed, and was distressingly broad in her innuendoes concerning Edbury's stepmother. This Club sat and became a terror for a month, adding something to my father's reputation. His inexhaustible conversational art and humour gave it such vitality as it had. Ladies of any age might apply for admission when well seconded: gentlemen under forty-five years were rigidly excluded, and the seniors must also have passed through the marriage ceremony.

Outside tattle and scandal declared, that the Club was originated to serve as a club for Lady Edbury, but I chose to have no opinion upon what I knew nothing of.

These matters were all ephemeral, and freaks; they produced, however, somewhat of the same effect on me as on my father, in persuading me that he was born for the sphere he occupied, and rendering me rather callous as to the sources of ways and means. I put my name to a bond for several thousand pounds, in conjunction with Lord Edbury, thinking my father right in wishing to keep my cheque-book unworried, lest the squire should be seized with a spasm of curiosity before the two months were over. 'I promise you I surprise him,' my father said repeatedly. He did not say how: I had the suspicion that he did not know. His confidence and my growing recklessness acted in unison.

Happily the newspapers were quiet. I hoped consequently to find peace at Riversley; but there the rumours of the Grand Parade were fabulous, thanks to Captain Bulsted and Julia, among others. These two again provoked an outbreak of rage from the squire, and I, after hearing them, was almost disposed to side with him; they suggested an inexplicable magnificence, and created an image of a man portentously endowed with the capacity to throw dust in the eyes. No description of the Balls could have furnished me with such an insight of their brilliancy as the consuming ardour they awakened in the captain and his wife. He reviewed them: 'Princely entertainments! Arabian Nights!'

She built them up piecemeal: 'The company! the dresses! the band! the supper!' The host was a personage supernatural. 'Aladdin's magician, if you like,' said Julia, 'only—good! A perfect gentleman! and I 'll say again, confound his enemies.' She presumed, as she was aware she might do, upon the squire's

prepossession in her favour, without reckoning that I was always the victim.

'Heard o' that new story 'bout a Dauphin?' he asked.

'A Dauphin?' quoth Captain Bulsted. 'I don't know the fish.'

'You 've been in a pretty kettle of 'em lately, William. I heard of it yesterday on the Bench. Lord Shale, our new Lord-Lieutenant, brought it down. A trick they played the fellow 'bout a Dauphin. Serve him right. You heard anything 'bout it, Harry?'

I had not.

'But I tell ye there is a Dauphin mixed up with him. A Dauphin and Mr. Ik Dine!'

'Mr. Ik Dine!' exclaimed the captain, perplexed.

'Ay, that 's German lingo, William, and you ought to know it if you 're a loyal sailor—means "I serve."'

'Mr. Beltham,' said the captain, seriously, 'I give you my word of honour as a man and a British officer, I don't understand one syllable of what you 're saying; but if it means any insinuation against the gentleman who condescends to extend his hospitalities to my wife and me, I must, with regret, quit the place where I have had the misfortune to hear it.'

'You stop where you are, William,' the squire motioned to him. ''Gad, I shall have to padlock my mouth, or I shan't have a friend left soon . . . confounded fellow. I tell you they call him Mr. Ik Dine in town. Ik Dine and a Dauphin! They made a regular clown and pantaloon o' the pair, I 'm told. Couple o' pretenders to Thrones invited to dine together and talk over their chances and show their private marks. Oho! by-and-by, William! You and I! Never a man made such a fool of in his life!'

The ladies retired. The squire continued, in a furious whisper :—

'They got the two together, William. Who are you? I 'm a Dauphin; who are you? I 'm Ik Dine, bar sinister. Oh! says the other, then I take precedence of you! Devil a bit, says the other; I 've got more spots than you. Proof, says one. You first, t' other. Count, one cries. T' other sings out, Measles. Better than a dying Dauphin, roars t' other; and swore both of 'm 'twas nothing but Port-wine stains and pimples. Ha! ha! And, William, will you believe it?—the couple went round begging the company to count spots—ha! ha!—to prove their big birth! Oh, Lord, I 'd ha' paid a penny to be there! A Jack o' Bedlam Ik Dine damned idiot!—makes name o' Richmond stink.' (Captain Bulsted shot a wild stare round the room to make sure that the ladies had gone.) 'I tell ye, William, I had it from Lord Shale himself only yesterday on the Bench. He brought it to us hot from town—didn't know I knew the fellow; says the fellow 's charging and firing himself off all day and all night too—can't make him out. Says London 's mad about him: lots o' women, the fools! Ha, ha! a Dauphin!'

'Ah, well, sir,' Captain Bulsted supplicated feverishly, rubbing his brows and whiskers.

'It 's true, William. Fellow ought to be taken up and committed as a common vagabond, and would be anywhere but in London. I 'd jail him 'fore you cocked your eye twice. Fellow came here and talked me over to grant him a couple o' months to prove he hasn't swindled his son of every scrap of his money. We shall soon see. Not many weeks to run! And pretends—fellow swears to me—can get him into Parliament; swears he 'll get him in 'fore the two months are over! An infernal——'

'Please to recollect, sir; the old hereditary shall excuse you——'

'Gout, you mean, William? By——'

'You are speaking in the presence of his son, sir, and you are trying the young gentleman's affection for you hard.'

'Eh? 'Cause I 'm his friend? Harry,' my grandfather faced round on me, 'don't you know I 'm the friend you can trust? Hal, did I ever borrow a farthing of you? Didn't I, the day of your majority, hand you the whole of your inheritance from your poor broken-hearted mother, with interest, and treat you like a man? And never played spy, never made an inquiry, till I heard the scamp had been fastening on you like a blood-sucker, and singing hymns into the ears of that squeamish dolt of a pipe-smoking parson, Peterborough—never thought of doing it! Am I the man that dragged your grandmother's name through the streets and soiled yours?'

I remarked that I was sensible of the debt of gratitude I owed to him, but would rather submit to the scourge, or to destitution, than listen to these attacks on my father.

'Cut yourself loose, Harry,' he cried, a trifle mollified. 'Don't season his stew—d' ye hear? Stick to decent people. Why, you don't expect he 'll be locked up in the Tower for a finish, eh? It 'll be Newgate, or the Bench. He and his Dauphin—ha! ha! A rascal crow and a Jack Dauphin!'

Captain Bulsted reached me his hand. 'You have a great deal to bear, Harry. I commend you, my boy, for taking it manfully.'

'I say no more,' quoth the squire. 'But what I said was true. The fellow gives his little dinners and suppers to his marchionesses, countesses, duchesses, and plays clown and pantaloon among the men. He thinks a parcel o' broidered petticoats 'll float him. So they may till a tradesman sent stark mad pops a pin into him. Harry,

I 'd as lief hang on to a fire-ship. Here 's Ilchester tells me . . . and Ilchester speaks of him under his breath now as if he were sitting in a pew funking the parson. Confound the fellow! I say he 's guilty of treason. Pooh! who cares! He cuts out the dandies of his day, does he? He 's past sixty, if he 's a month. It 's all damned harlequinade. Let him twirl off one columbine or another, or a dozen, and then the last of him! Fellow makes the world look like a farce. He 's got about eight feet by five to caper on, and all London gaping at him—geese! Are you a gentleman and a man of sense, Harry Richmond, to let yourself be lugged about in public—by the Lord! like a pair of street-tumblers in spangled haunch-bags, father and boy, on a patch of carpet, and a drum banging, and tossed and turned inside out, and my God! the ass of a fellow strutting the ring with you on his shoulder! That 's the spectacle. And you, Harry, now I 'll ask you, do you mean your wife—egad, it 'd be a pretty scene, with your princess in hip-up petticoats, stiff as bottle-funnel top down'ards, airing a whole leg, and knuckling a tambourine! '

' Not crying, my dear lad? ' Captain Bulsted put his arm round me kindly, and tried to catch a glimpse of my face. I let him see I was not going through that process. ' Whew! ' said he, ' and enough to make any Christian sweat! You 're in a bath, Harry. I wouldn't expect the man who murdered his godmother for one shilling and fivepence three-farthings the other day, to take such a slinging, and think he deserved it.'

My power of endurance had reached its limit.

' You tell me, sir, you had this brutal story from the Lord-Lieutenant of the county? '

' Ay, from Lord Shale. But I won't have you going to him and betraying our connection with a——'

' Halloo! ' Captain Bulsted sang out to his wife on the

lawn. 'And now, squire, I have had my dose. And you will permit me to observe, that I find it emphatically what we used to call at school black-jack.'

'And you were all the better for it afterwards, William.'

'We did not arrive at that opinion, sir. Harry, your arm. An hour with the ladies will do us both good. The squire,' he murmured, wiping his forehead as he went out, 'has a knack of bringing us into close proximity with hell-fire when he pleases.'

Julia screamed on beholding us, 'Aren't you two men as pale as death!'

Janet came and looked. 'Merely a dose,' said the captain. 'We are anxious to play battledore and shuttlecock madly.'

'So he shall, the dear!' Julia caressed him. 'We 'll all have a tournament in the wet-weather shed.'

Janet whispered to me, 'Was it—the Returning Thanks?'

'The what?' said I, with the dread at my heart of something worse than I had heard.

She hailed Julia to run and fetch the battledores, and then told me she had been obliged to confiscate the newspapers that morning and cast the burden on post-office negligence. 'They reach grandada's hands by afternoon post, Harry, and he finds objectionable passages blotted or cut out; and as long as the scissors don't touch the business columns and the debates, he never asks me what I have been doing. He thinks I keep a scrap-book. I haven't often time in the morning to run an eye all over the paper. This morning it was the first thing I saw.'

What had she seen? She led me out of view of the windows and showed me.

My father was accused of having stood up at a public dinner and returned thanks on behalf of an Estate of the

Realm : it read monstrously. I ceased to think of the suffering inflicted on me by my grandfather.

Janet and I, side by side with the captain and Julia, carried on the game of battledore and shuttlecock, in a match to see whether the unmarried could keep the shuttle flying as long as the married, with varying fortunes. She gazed on me, to give me the comfort of her sympathy, too much, and I was too intent on the vision of my father either persecuted by lies or guilty of hideous follies, to allow the match to be a fair one. So Julia could inform the squire that she and William had given the unmarried pair a handsome beating, when he appeared peeping round one of the shed-pillars.

'Of course you beat 'em,' said the squire. 'It 's not my girl's fault.' He said more, to the old tune, which drove Janet away.

I remembered, when back in the London vortex, the curious soft beauty she won from casting up her eyes to watch the descending feathers, and the brilliant direct beam of those thick-browed, firm, clear eyes, with her frown, and her set lips and brave figure, when she was in the act of striking to keep up a regular quick fusilade. I had need of calm memories. The town was astir, and humming with one name.

CHAPTER XLII

THE MARQUIS OF EDBURY AND HIS PUPPET

I PASSED from man to man, hearing hints and hesitations, alarming half-remarks, presumed to be addressed to one who could supply the remainder, and deduce consequences. There was a clearer atmosphere in the street of Clubs. Jennings was the first of my father's more intimate

acquaintances to meet me frankly. He spoke, though not with great seriousness, of the rumour of a possible prosecution. Sir Weeton Slater tripped up to us with a mixed air of solicitude and restraint, asked whether I was well, and whether I had seen the newspapers that morning ; and on my informing him that I had just come up from Riversley, on account of certain rumours, advised me to remain in town strictly for the present. He also hinted at rumours of prosecutions. 'The fact is——' he began several times, rendered discreet, I suppose, by my juvenility, fierté, and reputed wealth.

We were joined by Admiral Loftus and Lord Alton. They queried and counterqueried as to passages between my father and the newspapers, my father and the committee of his Club, preserving sufficient consideration for me to avoid the serious matter in all but distant allusions ; a point upon which the breeding of Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn was not so accurate a guide to him. An exciting public scandal soon gathers knots of gossips in Clubland. We saw Wedderburn break from a group some way down the pavement and pick up a fresh crumb of amusement at one of the doorsteps. 'Roy Richmond is having his benefit to-day ! ' he said, and repeated this and that, half audible to me. For the rest, he pooh-poohed the idea of the Law intervening. His 'How d' ye do, Mr. Richmond, how d' ye do ? ' was almost congratulatory. 'I think we meet at your father's table to-night ? It won't be in the Tower, take my word for it. Oh ! the papers ! There 's no Act to compel a man to deny what appears in the papers. No such luck as the Tower !—though Littlepitt (Mr. Wedderburn's nickname for our Premier) would be fool enough for *that*. He would. If he could turn attention from his Bill, he 'd do it. We should have to dine off Boleyn's block :—coquite horum obsonia, he 'd say, eh ? '

Jennings espied my father's carriage, and stepped to speak a word to the footman. He returned, saying, with a puff of his cheeks: 'The Grand Monarque has been sending his state equipage to give the old backbiting cripple Brisby an airing. He is for horse exercise to-day: they 've dropped him in Courtenay Square. There goes Brisby. He 'd take the good Samaritan's shilling to buy a flask of poison for him. He 'll use Roy's carriage to fetch and carry for that venomous old woman Kane, I 'll swear.'

'She 's a male in Scripture,' said Wedderburn, and this reminded me of an anecdote that reminded him of another, and after telling them, he handed round his hat for the laugh, as my father would have phrased it.

'Has her ladyship declared war?' Sir Weeton Slater inquired.

'No, that 's not her preliminary to wageing it,' Wedderburn replied. These high-pressure smart talkers had a moment of dulness, and he bethought him that he must run into the Club for letters, and was busy at Westminster, where, if anything fresh occurred between meridian and six o'clock, he should be glad, he said, to have word of it by messenger, that he might not be behind his Age.

The form of humour to express the speed of the world was common, but it struck me as a terrible illustration of my father's. I had still a sense of pleasure in the thought that these intimates of his were gentlemen who relished and, perhaps, really liked him. They were not parasites; not the kind of men found hanging about vulgar profligates.

I quitted them. Sir Weeton Slater walked half-a-dozen steps beside me. 'May I presume on a friendly acquaintance with your father, Mr. Richmond?' he said. 'The fact is—you will not be offended?—he is apt to lose his head, unless the Committee of Supply limits him very

precisely. I am aware that there is no material necessity for any restriction.' He nodded to me as to one of the marvellously endowed, as who should say, the Gods presided at your birth. The worthy baronet struggled to impart his meaning, which was, that he would have me define something like an allowance to my father, not so much for the purpose of curtailing his expenditure—he did not venture upon private ground—as to bridle my father's ideas of things possible for a private gentleman in this country. In that character none were like him. As to his suit, or appeal, he could assure me that Serjeant Wedderburn, and all who would or could speak on the subject, saw no prospect of success; not any. The worst of it was, that it caused my father to commit himself in sundry ways. It gave a handle to his enemies. It——he glanced at me indicatively.

I thanked the well-meaning gentleman without encouraging him to continue.

'It led him to perform once more as a Statue of Bronze before the whole of gaping London!' I could have added. That scene on the pine-promontory arose in my vision, followed by other scenes of the happy German days. I had no power to conjure up the princess.

Jorian DeWitt was the man I wanted to see. After applications at his Club and lodgings I found him dragging his Burgundy leg in the Park, on his road to pay a morning visit to his fair French enchantress. I impeached him, and he pleaded guilty, clearly not wishing to take me with him, nor would he give me Mlle. Jenny's address, which I had. By virtue of the threat that I would accompany him if he did not satisfy me, I managed to extract the story of the Dauphin, aghast at the discovery of its being true. The fatal after-dinner speech he believed to have been actually spoken, and he touched on that first. 'A trap was laid for him, Harry Richmond;

and a deuced clever trap it was. They smuggled in special reporters. There wasn't a bit of necessity for the toast. But the old vixen has shown her hand, so now he must fight. He can beat her single-handed on settees. He 'll find her a tartar at long bowls: she sticks at nothing. She blazes out, that he scandalizes her family. She has a dozen indictments against him. You must stop in town and keep watch. There 's fire in my leg to explode a powder-magazine a mile off ! '

' Is it the Margravine of Rippau ? ' I inquired. I could think of no other waspish old woman.

' Lady Kane,' said Jorian. ' She set Edbury on to face him with the Dauphin. You don't fancy it came of the young dog " all of himself," do you ? Why, it was clever ! He trots about a briefless little barrister, a scribbler, devilish clever and impudent, who does his farces for him. Tenby 's the fellow's name, and it 's the only thing I haven't heard him pun on. Puns are the smallpox of the language ;—we 're cursed with an epidemic. By gad, the next time I meet him I 'll roar out for vaccine matter.'

He described the dinner given by Edbury at a celebrated City tavern where my father and this so-called Dauphin were brought together. ' Dinner to-night,' he nodded, as he limped away on his blissful visit of ceremony to sprightly Chassediane (a bouquet had gone in advance) : he left me stupefied. The sense of ridicule enveloped me in suffocating folds, howling sentences of the squire's Bœotian burlesque by fits. I felt that I could not but take the world's part against the man who allowed himself to be made preposterous externally, when I knew him to be staking his frail chances and my fortune with such rashness. It was unpardonable for one in his position to incur ridicule. Nothing but a sense of duty kept me from rushing out of London, and

I might have indulged the impulse advantageously. Delay threw me into the clutches of Lady Kane herself, on whom I looked with as composed a visage as I could command, while she leaned out of her carriage chattering at me, and sometimes over my head to passing gentlemen.

She wanted me to take a seat beside her, she had so much to say. Was there not some funny story abroad of a Pretender to the Throne of France ? she asked, wrinkling her crow's-feet eyelids to peer at me, and wished to have the particulars. I had none to offer. 'Ah ! well,' said she ; 'you stay in London ? Come and see me. I 'm sure you 're sensible. You and I can put our heads together. He 's too often in Courtenay Square, and he 's ten years too young for that, still. He ought to have good advice. Tell me, how can a woman who can't guide herself help a man ?—and the most difficult man alive ! I 'm sure you understand me. I can't drive out in the afternoon for them. They make a crush here, and a clatter of tongues ! . . . That 's my private grievance. But he 's now keeping persons away who have the first social claim . . . I know they can't appear. Don't look confused ; no one accuses you. Only I do say it 's getting terribly hot in London for somebody. Call on me. Will you ? '

She named her hours. I bowed as soon as I perceived my opportunity. Her allusions were to Lady Edbury, and to imputed usurpations of my father's. I walked down to the Chambers where Temple was reading Law, for a refuge from these annoyances. I was in love with the modest shadowed life Temple lived, diligently reading, and glancing on the world as through a dusky window, happy to let it run its course while he sharpened his weapons. A look at Temple's face told me he had heard quite as much as was known in the West. Dining-halls of lawyers are not Cistercian ; he was able to give me

three distinct versions of the story of the Dauphin. No one could be friendlier. Indeed Temple now urged me forcibly to prevent my father from spending money and wearing his heart out in vain, by stopping the case in Dettermain and Newson's hands. They were respectable lawyers, he said, in a lawyer's ordinary tone when including such of his species as are not black sheep. He thought it possible that my father's personal influence overbore their judgement. In fact, nothing bound them to refuse to work for him, and he believed that they had submitted their views for his consideration.

'I do wish he 'd throw it up,' Temple exclaimed. 'It makes him enemies. And just examining it, you see he could get no earthly good out of it: he might as well try to scale a perpendicular rock. But when I 'm with him, I 'm ready to fancy what he pleases—I acknowledge that. He has excess of phosphorus, or he 's ultra-electrical; doctors could tell us better than lawyers.' Temple spoke of the clever young barrister Tenby as the man whom his father had heard laughing over the trick played upon 'Roy Richmond.' I conceived that I might furnish Mr. Tenby a livelier kind of amusement, and the thought that I had once been *sur le terrain*, and had bitterly regretted it, by no means deterred me from the idea of a second expedition, so black was my mood. A review of the circumstances, aided by what reached my ears before the night went over, convinced me that Edbury was my man. His subordinate helped him to the instrument, and possibly to the plot, but Edbury was the capital offender.

The scene of the prank was not in itself so bad as the stuff which a cunning anecdotist could make out of it. Edbury invited my father to a dinner at a celebrated City tavern. He kept his guests (Jennings, Jorian De Witt, Alton, Wedderburn, were among the few I was

acquainted with who were present) awaiting the arrival of a person for whom he professed extraordinary respect. The Dauphin of France was announced. A mild, flabby, amiable-looking old person, with shelving forehead and grey locks—excellently built for the object, Jorian said—entered. The Capet head and embonpoint were there. As far as a personal resemblance might go, his pretensions to be the long-lost Dauphin were grotesquely convincing, for, notwithstanding the accurate picture of the Family presented by him, the man was a pattern bourgeois :—a sturdy impostor, one would have thought, and I thought so when I heard of him ; but I have been assured that he had actually grown old in the delusion that he, carrying on his business in the City of London, was the identical Dauphin.

Edbury played his part by leading his poor old victim half way to meet his other most honoured guest, hesitating then and craving counsel whether he was right in etiquette to advance the Dauphin so far. The Dauphin left him mildly to decide the point : he was eminently mild throughout, and seems to have thought himself in good faith surrounded by believers and adherents. Edbury's task soon grew too delicate for that coarse boy. In my father's dexterous hands he at once lost his assumption of the gallantry of manner which could alone help him to retain his advantage. When the wine was in him he began to bawl. I could imagine the sort of dialogue he raised. Bets on the Dauphin, bets on Roy : they were matched as on a racecourse. The Dauphin remembered incidents of his residence in the Temple, with a beautiful juvenile faintness : a conscientious angling for recollection, Wedderburn said. Roy was requested to remember something, to drink and refresh his memory : infantine incidents were suggested. He fenced the treacherous host during dinner with superb complacency.

The Dauphin was of an immoveable composure. He 'stated simple facts: he was the Dauphin of France, providentially rescued from the Temple in the days of the Terror.' For this deliverance, somewhat to the consternation of the others, he offered up a short prayer of thanksgiving over his plate. He had, he said, encountered incredulity. He had his proofs. He who had never been on the soil of France since early boyhood, spoke French with a pure accent: he had the physical and moral constitution of the Family: owing to events attending his infant days, he was timid. Jorian imitated him:—'I start at the opening of a door; I see dark faces in my sleep: it is a dungeon; I am at the knees of my Unfortunate Royal Father, with my Beautiful Mother.' His French was quaint, but not absurd. He became loquacious, apostrophizing vacancy with uplifted hand and eye. The unwonted invitation to the society of noblemen made him conceive his Dauphinship to be on the high road to a recognition in England, and he was persuaded to drink and exhibit proofs: which were that he had the constitution of the Family, as aforesaid, in every particular; that he was peculiarly marked with testificatory spots; and that his mere aspect inspired all members and branch members of the Family with awe and stupefaction. One of the latter hearing of him, had appointed to meet him in a pastrycook's shop. He met him, and left the place with a cloud on his brow, showing tokens of respectful sympathy.

Conceive a monomaniacal obese old English citizen, given to lift hand and eye and address the cornices, claiming to be an Illustrious Boy, and calling on a beautiful historic mother and unfortunate Royal sire to attest it! No wonder the table was shaken with laughter. He appealed to Tenby constantly, as to the one man he knew in the room. Tenby it was who made the discovery

of him somewhere in the City, where he earned his livelihood either as a corn-merchant, or a stockbroker, or a chronometer-maker, or a drysalter, and was always willing to gratify a customer with the sight of his proofs of identity. Mr. Tenby made it his business to push his clamorous waggishness for the exhibition. I could readily believe that my father was more than his match in disposable sallies and weight of humour, and that he shielded the old creature successfully, so long as he had a tractable being to protect. But the Dauphin was plied with wine, and the marquis had his fun. Proof upon proof in verification of his claims was proffered by the now-tremulous son of St. Louis—so he called himself. With, Jorian admitted, a real courtly dignity, he stood up and proposed to lead the way to any neighbouring cabinet to show the spots on his person ; living witnesses to the truth of his allegations, he declared them to be. The squire had authority for his broad farce, except in so far as he mixed up my father in the swinery of it.

I grew more and more convinced that my father never could have lost his presence of mind when he found himself in the net of a plot to cover him with ridicule. He was the only one who did not retire to the Dauphin's 'chamber of testification,' to return convulsed with vinous laughter after gravely inspecting the evidence ; for which abstention the Dauphin reproached him violently, in round terms of abuse, challengeing him to go through a similar process. This was the signal for Edbury, Tenby, and some of the rest. They formed a circle, one-half for the Dauphin, one for Roy. How long the boorish fun lasted, and what exactly came of it, I did not hear. Jorian DeWitt said my father lost his temper, a point contested by Wedderburn and Jennings, for it was unknown of him. Anyhow, he thundered to some effect, inasmuch as he detached those that had

gentlemanly feelings from the wanton roysterers, and next day the latter pleaded wine. But they told the story, not without embellishments. The world followed their example.

I dined and slept at Temple's house, not caring to meet my incarnate humiliation. I sent to hear that he was safe. A quiet evening with a scholarly man, and a man of strong practical ability and shrewdness, like Mr. Temple, did me good. I wished my father and I were on the same footing as he and his son, and I may add his daughters. They all talked sensibly ; they were at feud with nobody ; they reflected their condition. It was a simple orderly English household, of which the father was the pillar, the girls the ornaments, the son the hope, growing to take his father's place. My envy of such a home was acute, and I thought of Janet, and how well she was fashioned to build one resembling it, if only the mate allotted to her should not be a fantastical dreamer. Temple's character seemed to me to demand a wife like Janet on its merits ; an idea that depressed me exceedingly. I had introduced Temple to Anna Penrhys, who was very kind to him ; but these two were not framed to be other than friends. Janet, on the contrary, might some day perceive the sterling fellow Temple was, notwithstanding his moderate height. She might, I thought. I remembered that I had once wished that she would, and I was amazed at myself. But why ? She was a girl sure to marry. I brushed these meditations away. They recurred all the time I was in Temple's house.

Mr. Temple waited for my invitation to touch on my father's Case, when he distinctly pronounced his opinion that it could end but in failure. Though a strict Constitutionalist, he had words of disgust for princes, acknowledging, however, that we were not practical in our use of them, and kept them for political purposes often to the

perversion of our social laws and their natural dispositions. He spoke of his son's freak in joining the Navy. 'That was the princess's doing,' said Temple. 'She talked of our naval heroes, till she made me feel I had only to wear the anchor buttons to be one myself. Don't tell her I was invalided from the service, Richie, for the truth is, I believe, I half-shammed. And the time won't be lost. You 'll see I shall extract guineas from "old ocean" like salt. Precious few barristers understand maritime cases. The other day I was in Court, and prompted a great Q.C. in a case of collision. Didn't I, sir?'

'I think there was a hoarse whisper audible up to the Judge's seat at intervals,' said Mr. Temple.

'The Bar cannot confess to obligations from those who don't wear the robe,' Temple rejoined.

His father advised me to read for the Bar, as a piece of very good training.

I appealed to Temple, whether he thought it possible to read law-books in a cockboat in a gale of wind.

Temple grimaced and his father nodded. Still it struck me that I might one day have the felicity of quiet hours to sit down with Temple and read Law—far behind him in the race. And he envied me, in his friendly manner, I knew. My ambition had been blown to tatters.

A new day dawned. The household rose and met at the breakfast-table, devoid of any dread of the morning newspapers. Their talk was like the chirrup of birds. Temple and his father walked away together to chambers, bent upon actual business—upon doing something! I reflected emphatically, and compared them to ships with rudders, while I was at the mercy of wind, tide, and wave. I called at Dettermain and Newson's, and heard there of a discovery of a witness essential to the case, either in

North Wales or in New South. I did not, as I had intended, put a veto on their proceedings. The thing to do was to see my father, and cut the case at the fountain head. For this purpose, it was imperative that I should go to him, and prepare myself for the interview by looking at the newspapers first. I bought one, hastily running my eyes down the columns in the shop. His name was printed, but merely in a fashionable notification that carriages took up and set down for his costume Ball, according to certain regulations. The relief of comparative obscurity helped me to breathe freely: not to be laughed at, was a gain. I was rather inclined to laud his courage in entering assembly-rooms, where he must be aware that he would see the Dauphin on every face. Perhaps he was guilty of some new extravagance last night, too late for scandal to reinforce the reporters!

Mrs. Waddy had a woeful visage when informing me that he was out, gone to Courtenay Square. She ventured a murmur of bills coming in. Like everybody else, she fancied he drew his supplies from my inexhaustible purse; she hoped the bills would be paid off immediately: the servants' wages were overdue. 'Never can I get him to attend to small accounts,' she whimpered, and was so ready to cry outright, that I said, 'Tush,' and with the one word gave her comfort. 'Of course, you, Mr. Harry, can settle them, I know that.' We were drawing near to poor old Sewis's legacy, even for the settling of the small accounts!

London is a narrow place to one not caring to be seen. I could not remain in this creditor-riddled house; I shunned the Parks, the Clubs, and the broad, brighter streets of the West. Musing on the refreshing change it would be to me to find myself suddenly on board Captain Jasper Welsh's barque Priscilla, borne away to strange climes and tongues, the world before me, I put on the

striding pace which does not invite interruption, and no one but Edbury would have taken the liberty. I heard his shout. 'Halloa! Richmond.' He was driving his friend Witlington in his cabriolet. 'Richmond, my hearty, where the deuce have you been? I wanted you to dine with me the other night.'

I replied, looking at him steadily, that I wished I had been there.

'Compendious larks!' cried he, in the slang of his dog's day. 'I say; you 're one at Duke Fitz's masquerade to-night? Tell us your toggery. Hang it, you might go for the Black Prince. I 'm Prince Hal. Got a headache? Come to my Club and try my mixture. Yoicks! it 'd make Methuselah and Melchisedec jump up and have a twirl and a fandango. I say, you 're thick with that little French actress Chastedian—jolly little woman! too much to say for herself to suit me.'

He described the style of woman that delighted him—an ideal English shepherdess of the print-shops, it appeared, and of extremely remote interest to me, I thought at the time. Eventually I appointed to walk round to his Club, and he touched his horse gently, and bobbed his diminutive henchman behind his smart cabriolet, the admiration of the street.

I found him waiting for me on the steps of his Club, puffing a cigar with all his vigour, in the classic attitude of a trumpeter. My first words were: 'I think I have to accuse you of insulting me.'

'Insulting you, Richmond!' he cried, much surprised, holding his cigar in transit.

'If you insult my father, I make you responsible to me.'

'Insult old Duke Fitz! I give you my word of honour, Richmond—why, I like him; I like the old boy. Wouldn't hurt him for the world and all Havannah.

What the deuce have you got into your head? Come in and smoke.'

The mention of his dinner and the Dauphin crazed him with laughter. He begged me as a man to imagine the scene: the old Bloated Bourbon of London Wall and Camberwell! an Illustrious Boy!—drank like a fish!—ready to show himself to the waiters! And then with 'Gee' and 'Gaw,' the marquis spouted out reminiscences of scene, the best ever witnessed! 'Up starts the Dauphin. "Damn you, sir! and damn me, sir, if I believe you have a spot on your whole body!" And snuffles and puffs—you should have been there, Richmond. I wrote to ask you: did, upon my life! I wanted you there. Lord! why, you won't get such fun in a century. And old Roy! he behaved uncommonly finely: said capital things, by Jove! Never saw him shine so; old trump! Says Dauphin, "My beautiful mother had a longing for strawberries out of season. I am marked with a strawberry, here." Says Roy: "It is an admirable and roomy site, but as I am not your enemy, sir, I doubt if I shall often have the opportunity to behold it." Ha! ha!—gee! Richmond, you 've missed the deucedest good scene ever acted.'

How could I, after having had an adversary like Prince Otto, call upon a fellow such as Edbury to give me reason for his conduct? He rollicked and laughed until my ungovernable impatience brought him to his senses.

'Dash it, you 're a fire-eater, I know, Richmond. We can't fight in this country; ain't allowed. And fighting 's infernal folly. By Jove! If you 're going to tumble down every man who enjoys old Roy, you 've your work cut out for you. He 's long chalks the best joke out. 'Twixt you and me, he did return thanks. What does it matter what old Duke Fitz does? I give him a lift

on his ladder with all my heart. He keeps a capital table. And I 'll be hanged if he hasn't got the secret of the women. How he does it——old Roy ! If the lords were ladies they 'd vote him premier peer, double quick. And I 'll tell you what, Richmond, I 'm thought a devil of a good-tempered fellow for not keeping watch over Courtenay Square. I don't call it my business to be house dog for a pretty stepmother. But there 's talking and nodding, and oh ! leave all that : come in and smoke, and let me set you up ; and I 'll shake your hand. Halloa ! I 'm hailed.'

A lady, grasping the veil across her face, beckoned her hand from a closed carriage below. Edbury ran down to her. I caught sight of ravishing golden locks, reminding me of Mabel Sweetwinter's hair, and pricking me with a sensation of spite at the sex for their deplorable madness in the choice of favourites. Edbury called me to come to the carriage window. I moved slowly, but the carriage wheeled about and rolled away. I could just see the outline of a head muffled in furs and lace.

' Queer fish, women ! ' he delivered himself of the philosophical ejaculation cloudily. I was not on terms with him to offer any remark upon the one in question. His imperturbable good humour foiled me, and I left him, merely giving him a warning, to which his answer was : ' Oh ! come in and have a bottle of claret.'

Claret or brandy had done its work on him by the time I encountered him some hours later, in the Park. Bramham DeWitt, whom I met in the same neighbourhood, offered me a mount after lunch, advising me to keep near my father as much as I conveniently could ; and he being sure to appear in the Park, I went, and heard his name to the right and left of me. He was now, as he said to me once that he should become, ' the tongue of London.' I could hardly expect to escape from curious scrutiny

myself ; I was looked at. Here and there I had to lift my hat and bow. The stultification of one's feelings and ideas in circumstances which divide and set them at variance is worse than positive pain. The looks shed on me were rather flattering, but I knew that in the background I was felt to be the son of the notorious. Edbury came trotting up to us like a shaken sack, calling, 'Heigh ! any of you seen old Roy ? ' Bramham DeWitt, a stiff, fashionable man of fifty, proud of his blood and quick as his cousin Jorian to resent an impertinence, replied : 'Are you the Marquis of Edbury, or a drunken groom, sir ? '

' 'Gad, old gentleman, I 've half a mind to ride you down,' said Edbury, and, espying me, challenged me to a race to run down the fogies.

A cavalcade of six abreast came cantering along. I saw my father listen to a word from Lady Edbury, and push his horse to intercept the marquis. They spoke. 'Presently, presently,' my father said ; 'ride to the rear, and keep at half a stone's throw—say, a groom's distance.'

'Groom be hanged ! ' Edbury retorted. 'I made a bet I 'd drive you out of the Park, old Roy ! '

'Ride behind, then,' said my father, and to my astonishment Edbury obeyed him, with laughter. Lady Edbury smiled to herself ; and I experienced the esteem I perceived in her for a masterful manner. A few minutes later my father beckoned me to pay my respects to Graf Kesensky, an ambassador with strong English predilections and some influence among us. He asked me if he was right in supposing I wished to enter Parliament. I said he was, wondering at the interest a foreigner could find in it. The count stopped a quiet-pacing gentleman. Bramham DeWitt joined them, and a group of friends. I was introduced to Mr. Beauchamp

Hill, the Government whip, who begged me to call on him with reference to the candidature of a Sussex borough: 'that is,' said he, turning to Graf Kesensky, 'if you 're sure the place is open? I 've heard nothing of Falmouth's accident.' The count replied that Falmouth was his intimate friend; he had received a special report that Falmouth was dying, just as he was on the point of mounting his horse. 'We shan't have lost time,' said Mr. Hill. The Government wanted votes. I went down to the House of Commons at midnight to see him. He had then heard of Falmouth's hopeless condition, and after extracting my political views, which were for the nonce those of a happy subserviency, he expressed his belief that the new writ for the borough of Chippenden might be out, and myself seated on the Government benches, within a very short period. Nor would it be necessary, he thought, for the Government nominee to spend money: 'though *that* does not affect you, Mr. Richmond!' My supposed wealth gave me currency even in political circles.

CHAPTER XLIII

I BECOME ONE OF THE CHOSEN OF THE NATION

An entire revulsion in my feelings and my way of thinking was caused by this sudden change of prospect. A member of our Parliament, I could then write to Ottilia, and tell her that I had not wasted time. And it was due to my father, I confessed, when he returned from his ball at dawn, that I should thank him for speaking to Graf Kesensky. 'Oh!' said he, 'that was our luck, Richie. I have been speaking about you to hundreds

for the last six months, and now we owe it to a foreigner!' I thanked him again. He looked eminently handsome in his Henry III. costume, and was disposed to be as luxurious as his original. He had brought Count Lika, Secretary of Legation to the Austrian Embassy, dressed as an Albanian, with him. The two were stretched on couches, and discoursing of my father's reintroduction of the sedan chair to society. My father explained that he had ordered a couple of dozen of these chairs to be built on a pattern of his own. And he added, 'By the way, Richie, there will be sedaniers—porters to pay to-day. Poor men should be paid immediately.' I agreed with the monarch. Contemplating him, I became insensible to the sting of ridicule which had been shooting through me, agonizing me for the last eight-and-forty hours. Still I thought: can I never escape from the fascination?—let me only get into Parliament! The idea in me was that Parliament lifted me nearer to Ottilia, and would prompt me to resolute action, out of his tangle of glittering cobwebs. I told him of my interview with Beauchamp Hill. 'I have never known Kesensky wrong yet,' said he; 'except in his backing of Falmouth's horses.' Count Lika murmured that he hoped his Chief would be wrong in something else: he spoke significantly. My father raised his eyebrows. 'In his opinion,' Lika accepted the invitation to pursue, 'Prince Ernest will not let that announcement stand uncontradicted.'

My father's eyes dwelt on him. 'Are *we* accused of it?'

Lika slipped from the question. 'Who is accused of a newspaper's doings? It is but the denial of a statement.'

'I dare them to deny it!—and, Lika, my dear fellow, light me a cigarette,' said my father.

'Then,' said Lika, touching the flame delicately, 'you take the view that Kesensky is wrong in another thing besides horses.'

I believe he struck on the subject casually: there was nothing for him to gain or lose in it; and he had a liking for my father.

After puffing the cigarette twice or thrice my father threw it down, resuming his conversation upon the sedan, the appropriate dresses of certain of the great masquerading ladies, and an incident that appeared to charge Jorian DeWitt with having misconducted himself. The moment Lika had gone upstairs for two or three hours' sleep, he said to me: 'Richie, you and I have no time for that. We must have a man at Falmouth's house by eight o'clock. If the scrubbing-maid on all fours—not an inelegant position, I have remarked—declares him dead, we are at Bartlett's (money-lender) by ten: and in Chippenden borough before two post meridian. As I am a tactician, there is mischief! but I will turn it to my uses, as I did our poor Jorian to-night;—he smuggled in the Chassediane: I led her out on my arm. Of that by and by. The point is, that from your oath in Parliament you fly to Sarkeld. I implore you now, by your love for me and the princess, not to lose precious minutes. Richie, we will press things so that you shall be in Sarkeld by the end of the month. My son! my dear boy! how you loved me once!—you do still! then follow my directions. I have a head. Ay, you think it wild? 'Tis true, my mother was a poetess. But I will convince my son as I am convincing the world—tut, tut! To avoid swelling talk, I tell you, Richie, I have my hand on the world's wheel, and now is the time for you to spring from it and gain your altitude. If you fail, *my* success is emptiness.'

'Will you avoid Edbury and his like, and protect

yourself ? ' was my form of stipulation, spoken to counteract his urgency.

He gave no answer beyond a wave of the hand suitable to his princely one-coloured costume of ruffled lavender silk, and the magnificent leg he turned to front me. My senses even up to that period were so impressionable as to be swayed by a rich dress and a grand manner when circumstances were not too unfavourable. Now they seemed very favourable, for they offered me an upward path to tread. His appearance propitiated me less after he had passed through the hands of his man Tollingby, but I had again surrendered the lead to him. As to the risk of proceedings being taken against him, he laughed scornfully at the suggestion. 'They dare not. The more I dare, the less dare they.' Again I listened to his curious roundabout reasoning, which dragged humour at its heels like a comical cur, proclaiming itself imposingly, in spite of the mongrel's barking, to be prudence and common sense. Could I deny that I owed him gratitude for the things I cherished most ?—for my acquaintance with Ottilia ?—for his services in Germany ? —for the prospect of my elevation in England ? I could not ; and I tried hard to be recklessly grateful. As to money, he reiterated that he could put his hand on it to satisfy the squire on the day of accounts : for the present, we must borrow. His argument upon borrowing—which I knew well, and wondered that I did not at the outset disperse with a breath of contempt—gained on me singularly when reviewed under the light of my immediate interests : it ran thus :—We have a rich or a barren future, just as we conceive it. The art of generalship in life consists in gathering your scattered supplies to suit a momentous occasion ; and it is the future which is chiefly in debt to us, and adjures us for its sake to fight the fight and conquer. That man is

vile and fit to be trampled on who cannot count his future in gold and victory. If, as we find, we are always in debt to the past, we should determine that the future is in our debt, and draw on it. Why let our future lie idle while we need succour? For instance, to-morrow I am to have what saves my reputation in the battle to-day; shall I not take it at once? The military commander who acts on that principle overcomes his adversary to a certainty.

'You, Richie, the member for this borough of Chippenden, have won solid ground. I guarantee it to you. And you go straight from the hustings, or the first taste of parliamentary benches, to Sarkeld: you take your grandad's proposition to Prince Ernest: you bring back the prince's acceptance to the squire. Can you hope to have a princess without a battle for her?' More and much more in this strain, until—for he could read me and most human beings swiftly on the surface, notwithstanding the pressure of his fancifulness—he perceived that talking influenced me far less than activity, and so after a hurried breakfast and an innocuous glance at the damp morning papers, we started to the money-lender's, with Jennings to lend his name. We were in Chippenden close upon the hour my father had named, bringing to the startled electors the first news of their member's death.

During the heat of the canvass for votes I received a kind letter from the squire in reply to one of mine, wherein he congratulated me on my prospects of success, and wound up: 'Glad to see it announced you are off with that princess of yours. Show them we are as proud as they are, Harry, and a fig for the whole foreign lot! Come to Riversley soon, and be happy.' What did that mean? Heriot likewise said in a letter: 'So it 's over? The proud prince kicks? You will not thank me for

telling you now what you know I think about it.' I appealed to my father. 'Canvass! canvass!' cried he; and he persistently baffled me. It was from Temple I learnt that on the day of our starting for Chippenden, the newspapers contained a paragraph in large print flatly denying upon authority that there was any foundation for the report of an intended marriage between the Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld and an English gentleman. Then I remembered how that morning my father had flung the papers down, complaining of their dampness.

Would such denial have appeared without Ottilia's sanction?

My father proved that I was harnessed to him; there was no stopping, no time for grieving. Pace was his specific. He dragged me the round of the voters; he gave dinners at the inn of true Liberals, and ate of them contentedly; he delivered speeches incessantly. The whole force of his serio-comic genius was alive in its element at Chippenden. From Balls and dinners, and a sharp contest to maintain his position in town, he was down among us by the first morning train, bright as Apollo, and quite the sun of the place, dazzling the independent electors and their wives, and even me somewhat; amazing me, certainly. Dettermain, his lawyer, who had never seen him in action, and supposed he would treat an election as he did his Case, with fits and starts of energy, was not less astonished, and tried to curb him.

'Mr. Dettermain, my dear sir, I apprehend it is the electoral maxim to woo the widowed borough with the tear in its eye, and I shall do so hotly, in a right masculine manner,' my father said. 'We have the start; and if we beat the enemy by nothing else we will beat him by constitution. We are the first in the field, and not to

reap it is to acknowledge oneself deficient in the very first instrument with which grass was cut.'

Our difficulty all through the election was to contend with his humour. The many triumphs it won for him, both in speech and in action, turned at least the dialectics of the argument against us, and amusing, flattering, or bewildering, contributed to silence and hold us passive. Political convictions of his own, I think I may say with truth, he had none. He would have been just as powerful, after his fashion, on the Tory side, pleading for Mr. Normanton Hipperdon ; more, perhaps : he would have been more in earnest. His store of political axioms was Tory ; but he did remarkably well, and with no great difficulty, in confuting them to the wives of voters, to the voters themselves, and at public assemblies. Our adversary was redoubtable ; a promising Opposition member, ousted from his seat in the North—a handsome man, too, which my father admitted, and wealthy, being junior partner in a City banking firm. Anna Penrhys knew him, and treacherously revealed some of the enemy's secrets, notably concerning what he termed our incorrigible turn for bribery.

' And that means,' my father said, ' that Mr. Hipperdon does not possess the art of talking to the ladies. I shall try him in repartee on the hustings. I must contrive to have our Jorian at my elbow.'

The task of getting Jorian to descend upon such a place as Chippenden worried my father more than electoral anxieties. Jorian wrote, ' My best wishes to you. Be careful of your heads. The habit of the Anglo-Saxon is to conclude his burlesques with a play of cudgels. It is his notion of freedom, and at once the exordium and peroration of his eloquence. Spare me the Sussex accent on your return.'

My father read out the sentences of this letter with

admiring bursts of indignation at the sarcasms, and an evident idea that I inclined to jealousy of the force displayed.

'But we must have him,' he said; 'I do not feel myself complete without Jorian.'

So he made dispositions for a concert to be given in Chippenden town. Jenny Chassediane was invited down to sing, and Jorian came in her wake, of course. He came to suffer tortures. She was obliging enough to transform me into her weapon of chastisement upon the poor fellow for his behaviour to her at the Ball—atrocious, I was bound to confess. On this point she hesitated just long enough to imply a doubt whether, under any circumstances, the dues of men should be considered before those of her sex, and then struck her hands together with enthusiasm for my father, who was, she observed—critical in millinery in the height of her ecstasy—the most majestic, charming, handsome Henri III. imagin-

able, the pride and glory of the assembly, only one degree too rosy at night for the tone of the lavender, needing a touch of French hands, and the merest trifle in want of compression about the waistband. She related that a certain Prince Henri d'Angleterre had buzzed at his ear annoyingly. 'Et Gascoigne, où est-il?' called the King, and the Judge stepped forth to correct the obstreperous youth. The Judge was Jennings, clearly prepared by my father to foil the Prince—no other than Edbury. It was incomprehensible to me that my father should tolerate the latter's pranks; unless, indeed, he borrowed his name to bonds of which I heard nothing.

Mademoiselle Chassediane vowed that her own dress was ravishing. She went attired as a boudoir-shepherdess or demurely-coquettish Sèvres-china Ninette, such of whom Louis Quinze would chuck the chin down the deadly introductory walks of Versailles. The reason of

her desiring to go was the fatal sin of curiosity, and, therefore, her sex's burden, not hers. Jorian was a Mousquetaire, with plumes and ruffles prodigious, and a hen's heart beneath his cock's feathers. 'Pourtant j'y allai. I saw your great ladies, how they carry themselves when they would amuse themselves, and, mon Dieu! Paris has done its utmost to grace their persons, and the length of their robes did the part of Providence in bestowing height upon them, parceque, vous savez, Monsieur, c'est extraordinaire comme ils ont les jambes courtes, ces Anglaises!' Our aristocracy, however, was not so bad in that respect as our bourgeoisie; yet it was easy to perceive that our female aristocracy, though they could ride, had never been drilled to walk: 'de belles femmes, oui; seulement, tenez, je n'admire ni les yeux de vache, ni de souris, ni même ceux de verre comme ornement féminin. Avec de l'embonpoint elles font de l'effet, mais maigre il n'y a aucune illusion possible.'

This vindictive critic smarted, with cause, at the recollection of her walk out of her rooms. Jorian's audacity or infatuation quitted him immediately after he had gratified her whim. The stout Mousquetaire placed her in a corner, and enveloped her there, declaring that her petition had been that she might come to see, not to be seen,—as if, she cried out tearfully, the two wishes must not necessarily exist together, like the masculine and the feminine in this world! Prince Hal, acting the most profligate period of his career, espied her behind the Mousquetaire's moustache, and did not fail to make much of his discovery. In a perilous moment for the reputation of the Ball, my father handed him over to Gascoigne, and conducted Jenny in a leisurely walk on his arm out of the rooms.

'Il est comme les Romains,' she said: 'he never despairs of himself. It is a Jupiter! If he must punish

you he confers a dignity in doing it. Now I comprehend, that with such women as these grandes dames Anglaises I should have done him harm but for his greatness of soul.'

Some harm, I fancied, must have been done, in spite of his boast to the contrary. He had to be in London every other night, and there were tales current of intrigues against him which had their sources from very lofty regions. But in Chippenden he threw off London, just as lightly as in London he discarded Chippenden. No symptom of personal discouragement, or of fatigue, was betrayed in his face. I spoke once of that paragraph purporting to emanate from Prince Ernest.

'It may,' he said. 'Business! Richie.'

He set to counting the promises of votes, disdaining fears and reflections. Concerts, cricket-matches, Balls, dinner-parties, and the round of the canvass, and speech-making at our gatherings, occupied every minute of my time, except on Saturday evenings, when I rode over to Riversley with Temple to spend the Sunday. Temple, always willing to play second to me, and a trifle melancholy under his partial eclipse—which, perhaps, suggested the loss of Janet to him—would have it that this election was one of the realizations of our boyish dreams of greatness. The ladies were working rosettes for me. My aunt Dorothy talked very anxiously about the day appointed by my father to repay the large sum expended. All hung upon that day, she said, speaking from her knowledge of the squire. She was moved to an extreme distress by the subject.

'He is confident, Harry; but where can he obtain the money? If your grandfather sees it invested in your name in Government securities, he will be satisfied, not otherwise: nothing less will satisfy him; and if that is not done, he will join you and your father together in his mind; and as he has hitherto treated one he will treat

both. I know him. He is just, to the extent of his vision; but he will not be able to separate you. He is aware that your father has not restricted his expenses since they met; he will say you should have used your influence.'

She insisted on this, until the tears streamed from her eyes, telling me that my grandfather was the most upright and unsuspicious of men, and precisely on that account the severest when he thought he had been deceived. The fair chances of my election did not console her, as it did me, by dazzling me. She affirmed strongly that she was sure my father expected success at the election to be equivalent to the promised restitution of the money, and begged me to warn him that nothing short of the sum squandered would be deemed sufficient at Riversley. My dear aunt, good woman though she was, seemed to me to be waxing miserly. The squire had given her the name of Parsimony; she had vexed him, Janet told me, by subscribing a miserable sum to a sailors' asylum that he patronized—a sum he was ashamed to see standing as the gift of a Beltham; and she had stopped the building of a wing of her village school-house, designed upon his plan. Altogether, she was fretful and distressful; she appeared to think that I could have kept my father in better order. Riversley was hearing new and strange reports of him. But how could I at Chippenden thwart his proceedings in London? Besides, he was serving me indefatigably.

It can easily be imagined what description of banter he had to meet and foil.

'This gentleman is obliging enough to ask me, "How about the Royal Arms?" If in his extreme consideration he means to indicate *my* Arms, I will inform him that they are open to him; he shall find entertainment for man *and beast*; so he is doubly assured of a welcome.'

Questioned whether he did not think he was entitled to be rated at the value of half-a-crown, he protested that whatever might be the sum of his worth, he was pure coin, of which neither party in Chippenden could accuse the silver of rubbing off; and he offered forthwith an impromptu apologue of a copper penny that passed itself off for a crown-piece, and deceived a portion of the country: that was why (with a wave of the arm over the Hipperdon faction) it had a certain number of backers; for everybody on whom the counterfeit had been foisted, praised it to keep it in the currency.

'Now, gentlemen, I apprehend that Chippenden is not the pocket-borough for Hipperdon coin. Back with him to the Mint! and, with your permission, we will confiscate the first syllable of his name, while we consign him to oblivion, with a hip, hip, hip, hurrah for Richmond!'

The cheers responded thunderingly, and were as loud when he answered a 'How 'bout the Dauphin?' by saying that it was the Tory hotel, of which he knew nothing.

'A cheer for old Roy!' Edbury sang out.

My father checked the roar, and turned to him.

'Marquis of Edbury, come to the front!'

Edbury declined to budge, but the fellows round him edged aside to show him a mark for my father's finger.

'Gentlemen, this is the young Marquis of Edbury, a member of the House of Lords by right of his birth, born to legislate for you and me. He, gentlemen, makes our laws. Examine him, hear him, meditate on him.'

He paused cruelly for Edbury to open his mouth. The young lord looked confounded, and from that moment behaved becomingly.

'He might have been doing mischief to-morrow,' my father said to me, and by letting me conceive his adroitness a matter of design, comforted me with proofs of

intelligent power, and made me feel less the melancholy conjunction of a piece of mechanism and a piece of criticism, which I was fast growing to be in the contemplation of the agencies leading to honour in our land. Edbury whipped his four-in-hand to conduct our voters to the poll. We had to pull hard against Tory interest. It was a sharp, dubious, hot day—a day of outcries against undue influence and against bribery—a day of beer and cheers and the insanest of tricks to cheat the polling-booth. Old John Thresher of Dipwell, and Farmer Eckerthy drove over to Chippenden to afford me aid and countenance, disconcerting me by the sight of them, for I associated them with Janet rather than with Ottilia, and it was to Ottilia that I should have felt myself rising when the figures increased their pace in my favour, and the yeasty mob surrounding my father's superb four-horsed chariot responded to his orations by proclaiming me victor.

'I congratulate you, Mr. Richmond,' Dettermain said. 'Up to this day I have had my fears that we should haul more moonshine than fish in our net. Your father has accomplished prodigies.'

My father, with the bloom of success on his face, led me aside soon after a safe majority of upwards of seventy had been officially announced. 'Now, Richie,' said he, 'you are a Member. Now to the squire away! Thank the multitude and off, and as quick to Sarkeld as you well can, and tell the squire from me that I pardon his suspicions. I have landed you a Member—that will satisfy him. I am willing, tell him . . . you know me competent to direct mines . . . bailiff of his estates—whatever he pleases, to effect a reconciliation. I must be in London to-night—I am in the thick of the fray there. No matter: go, my son.'

He embraced me. It was not a moment for me to

catechize him, though I could see that he was utterly deluded.

Between moonlight and morning, riding with Temple and Captain Bulsted on either side of me, I drew rein under the red Grange windows, tired, and in love with its air of sleepy grandeur. Janet's window was open. I hailed her. 'Has he won?' she sang out in the dark of her room, as though the cry of delight came upon the leap from bed. She was dressed. She had commissioned Farmer Eckerthy to bring her the news at any hour of the night. Seeing me, she clapped hands. 'Harry, I congratulate you a thousand times.' She had wit to guess that I should never have thought of coming had I not been the winner. I could just discern the curve and roll of her famed thick brown hair in the happy shrug of her shoulder, and imagined the full stream of it as she leaned out of window to talk to us.

Janet herself unfastened the hall-door bolts. She caressed the horses, feverishly exulting, with charming subdued laughter of victory and welcome, and amused us by leading my horse round to stables, and whistling for one of the lads, playing what may, now and then, be a pretty feature in a young woman of character—the fair tom-boy girl. She and her maid prepared coffee and toast for us, and entered the hall, one after the other, laden with dishes of cold meat; and not until the captain had eaten well did she tell him slyly that somebody, whom she had brought to Riversley yesterday, was abed and asleep upstairs. The slyness and its sisterly innocence lit up our eyes, and our hearts laughed. Her cheeks were deliciously overcoloured. We stole I know not what from the night and the day, and conventional circumstances, and rallied Captain Bulsted, and behaved as decorous people who treat the night properly, and live by rule, do not quite do. Never since Janet was a girl had I seen

her so spirited and responsive : the womanly armour of half-reserve was put away. We chatted with a fresh-hearted natural young creature who forfeited not a particle of her ladyship while she made herself our comrade in talk and frolic.

Janet and I walked part of the way to the station with Temple, who had to catch an early train, and returning—the song of skylarks covering us—joined hands, having our choice between nothing to say, and the excess ; perilous both.

CHAPTER XLIV

MY FATHER IS MIRACULOUSLY RELIEVED BY FORTUNE

My grandfather had a gratification in my success, mingled with a transparent jealousy of the chief agent in procuring it. He warned me when I left him that he was not to be hoodwinked : he must see the money standing in my name on the day appointed. His doubts were evident, but he affected to be expectant. Not a word of Sarkeld could be spoken. My success appeared to be on a more visionary foundation the higher I climbed.

Now Jorian DeWitt had affirmed that the wealthy widow Lady Sampleman was to be had by my father for the asking. Placed as we were, I regarded the objections to his alliance with her in a mild light. She might lend me the money to appease the squire ; that done, I would speedily repay it. I admitted, in a letter to my aunt Dorothy, the existing objections : but the lady had long been enamoured of him, I pleaded, and he was past the age for passionate affection, and would infallibly be courteous and kind. She was rich. We might count on her to watch over him carefully. Of course, with such

a wife, he would sink to a secondary social sphere ; was it to be regretted if he did ? The letter was a plea for my own interests, barely veiled.

At the moment of writing it, and moreover when I treated my father with especial coldness, my heart was far less warm in the contemplation of its pre-eminent aim than when I was suffering him to endanger it, almost without a protest. Janet and a peaceful Riversley, and a life of quiet English distinction, beckoned to me visibly, and not hatefully. The image of Ottilia conjured up pictures of a sea of shipwrecks, a scene of immeasurable hopelessness. Still, I strove toward that. My strivings were against my leanings, and imagining the latter, which involved no sacrifice of the finer sense of honour, to be in the direction of my lower nature, I repelled them to preserve a lofty aim that led me through questionable ways.

'Can it be you, Harry,' my aunt Dorothy's reply ran (I had anticipated her line of reasoning, though not her warmth), 'who advise him to this marriage from a motive so inexplicably unworthy ? That you will repay her the money, I do not require your promise to assure me. The money is nothing. It is the prospect of her life and fortune which you are consenting, if not urging him, to imperil for your own purposes. Are you really prepared to imitate in him, with less excuse for doing it, the things you most condemn ? Let it be checked at the outset. It cannot be. A marriage of inclination on both sides, prudent in a worldly sense, we might wish for him, perhaps, if he could feel quite sure of himself. His wife might persuade him not to proceed in his law-case. There I have long seen his ruin. He builds such expectations on it ! You speak of something worse than a mercenary marriage. I see this in your handwriting !—your approval of it ! I have to check the whisper that tells me

it reads like a conspiracy. Is she not a simpleton ? Can you withhold your pity ? and pitying, can you possibly allow her to be *entrapped* ? Forgive my seeming harshness. I do not often speak to my Harry so. I do now because I must appeal to you, as the one chiefly responsible, on whose head the whole weight of a dreadful error will fall. Oh ! my dearest, be guided by the purity of your feelings to shun doubtful means. I have hopes that after the first few weeks your grandfather will—I know he does not expect to find the engagement fulfilled —be the same to *you* that he was before he discovered the extravagance. You are in Parliament, and I am certain, that by keeping as much as possible to *yourself*, and living soberly, your career there will persuade him to meet your wishes.'

The letter was of great length. In conclusion, she entreated me to despatch an answer by one of the early morning trains ; entreating me once more to cause ' any actual deed ' to be at least postponed. The letter revealed what I had often conceived might be.

My rejoinder to my aunt Dorothy laid stress on my father's pledge of his word of honour as a gentleman to satisfy the squire on a stated day. I shrank from the idea of the Riversley crow over him. As to the lady, I said we would see that her money was fastened to her securely before she committed herself to the deeps. The money to be advanced to me would lie at my bankers, in my name, untouched : it would be repaid in the bulk after a season. This I dwelt on particularly, both to satisfy her and to appease my sense of the obligation. An airy pleasantry in the tone of this epistle amused me while writing it and vexed me when it had gone. But a letter sent, upon special request, by railway, should not, I thought, be couched in the ordinary strain. Besides one could not write seriously of a person like Lady Sampleman.

I consulted my aunt Dorothy's scruples by stopping my father on his way to the lady. His carriage was at the door: I suggested money-lenders: he had tried them all. He begged me to permit him to start: but it was too ignominious to think of its being done under my very eyes, and I refused. He had tried the money-lenders yesterday. They required a mortgage solider than expectations for the sum we wanted. Dettermain and Newson had declined to undertake the hypothecation of his annuity. Providence pointed to Sampleman.

'You change in a couple of nights, Richie,' said he. 'Now I am always the identical man. I shall give happiness to one sincerely good soul. I have only to offer myself—let me say in becoming modesty, I believe so. Let me go to her and have it over, for with me a step taken is a thing sanctified. I have in fact held her in reserve. Not that I think Fortune has abandoned us: but a sagacious schemer will not leave everything to the worthy Dame. I should have driven to her yesterday, if I had not heard from Dettermain and Newson that there was a hint of a negotiation for a compromise. Government is fairly frightened.'

He mused. 'However, I slept on it, and arrived at the conclusion this morning that my old Richie stood in imminent jeopardy of losing the fruit of all my toil. The good woman will advance the money to her husband. When I pledged my word to the squire I had reason to imagine the two months a sufficient time. We have still a couple of days. I have heard of men who lost heart at the eleventh hour, and if they had only hung on, with gallant faith in themselves, they would have been justified by the result. Faith works miracles. At least it allows time for them.'

His fertile ingenuity spared mine the task of persuading him to postpone the drive to Lady Sampleman. But

that he would have been prompt to go, at a word from me, and was actually about to go when I entered his house, I could not question.

He drove in manifest relief of mind to Dettermain and Newson's.

I had an appointment with Mr. Temple at a great political Club, to meet the gentlemen who were good enough to undertake the introduction of the infant member to the House of Commons. My incessantly twisting circumstances foiled the pleasure and pride due to me. From the Club I bent my steps to Temple's district, and met in the street young Eckart vom Hof, my champion and second on a memorable occasion, fresh upon London, and looking very Germanic in this drab forest of our city people. He could hardly speak of Deutschland for enthusiasm at the sight of the moving masses. His object in coming to England, he assured me honestly, was to study certain editions of Tibullus in the British Museum. When he deigned to speak of Sarkeld, it was to say that Prince Hermann was frequently there. I gave him no chance to be sly, though he pushed for it, at a question of the Princess Ottilia's health.

The funeral pace of the block of cabs and omnibuses engrossed his attention. Suddenly the Englishman afforded him an example of the reserve of impetuosity we may contain. I had seen my aunt Dorothy in a middle line of cabs coming from the City, and was darting in a twinkling among wheels and shafts and nodding cab-horse noses to take her hand and know the meaning of her presence in London. She had family business to do : she said no more. I mentioned that I had checked my father for a day or two. She appeared grateful. Her anxiety was extreme that she might not miss the return train, so I relinquished her hand, commanded the cabman to hasten, and turned to rescue Eckart—too young and

faithful a collegian not to follow his friend, though it were into the lion's den—from a terrific entanglement of horse-flesh and vehicles brawled over by a splendid collision of tongues. Secure on the pavement again, Eckart humbly acknowledged that the English tongue could come out upon occasions. I did my best to amuse him. Whether it amused him to see me take my seat in the House of Commons, and hear a debate in a foreign language, I cannot say; but the only pleasure of which I was conscious at that period lay in the thought that he or his father, Baron vom Hof, might some day relate the circumstance at Prince Ernest's table, and fix in Ottilia's mind the recognition of my having tried to perform my part of the contract. Beggared myself, and knowing Prince Hermann to be in Sarkeld, all I hoped for was to show her I had followed the path she traced. My state was lower: besides misfortune I now found myself exalted only to feel my profound insignificance.

'The standard for the House is a man's ability to do things,' said Charles Etherell, my friendly introductor, by whom I was passingly, perhaps ironically, advised to preserve silence for two or three sessions.

He counselled the study of Foreign Affairs for a present theme. I talked of our management of them, in the strain of Dr. Julius von Karsteg.

'That 's journalism, or clippings from a bilious essay; it won't do for the House,' he said. 'Revile the House to the country, if you like, but not the country to the House.'

When I begged him to excuse my absurdity, he replied: 'It 's full of promise, so long as you 're silent.'

But to be silent was to be merely an obedient hound of the whip. And if the standard for the House was a man's ability to do things, I was in the seat of a better man. External sarcasms upon the House,

flavoured with justness, came to my mind, but if these were my masters surrounding me, how indefinitely small must I be !

Leaving the House on that first night of my sitting, I received Temple's congratulations outside, and, as though the sitting had exhausted every personal sentiment, I became filled with his ; under totally new sensations, I enjoyed my distinction through the perception of my old comrade's friendly jealousy.

' I 'll be there, too, some day,' he said, moaning at the prospect of an extreme age before such honours would befall him.

The society of Eckart prevented me from urging him to puff me up with his talk as I should have wished, and after I had sent the German to be taken care of by Mrs. Waddy, I had grown so accustomed to the worldly view of my position that I was fearing for its stability. Threats of a petition against me were abroad. Supposing the squire disinherited me, could I stand ? An extraordinary appetite for wealth, a novel appreciation of it—which was, in truth, a voluntary enlistment into the army of mankind, and the adoption of its passions—pricked me with an intensity of hope and dread concerning my dependence on my grandfather. I lay sleepless all night, tossing from Riversley to Sarkeld, condemned, it seemed, to marry Janet and gain riches and power by renouncing my hope of the princess and the glory belonging to her, unless I should within a few hours obtain a show of figures at my bankers.

I had promised Etherell to breakfast with him. A note —a faint scream—despatched by Mrs. Waddy to Mr. Temple's house informed me that ' the men ' were upon them. If so, they were the forerunners of a horde, and my father was as good as extinguished. He staked everything on success ; consequently, he forfeited pity.

Good-bye to ambition, I thought, and ate heartily, considering robustly the while how far lower than the general level I might avoid falling. The report of the debates in morning papers—doubtless, more flowing and, perhaps, more grammatical than such as I gave ear to over-night—had the odd effect on me of relieving me from the fit of subserviency into which the speakers had sunk me.

A conceit of towering superiority took its place, and as Etherell was kind enough to draw me out and compliment me, I was attacked by a tragic sense of contrast between my capacities and my probable fortunes. It was open to me to marry Janet. But this meant the loosening of myself with my own hand for ever from her who was my mentor and my glory, to gain whom I was in the very tideway. I could not submit to it, though the view was like that of a green field of the springs passed by a climber up the crags. I went to Anna Penrhys to hear a woman's voice, and partly told her of my troubles. She had heard Mr. Hipperdon express his confident opinion that he should oust me from my seat. Her indignation was at my service as a loan: it sprang up fiercely and spontaneously in allusions to something relating to my father, of which the Marquis of Edbury had been guilty. 'How you can bear it!' she exclaimed, for I was not wordy. The exclamation, however, stung me to put pen to paper—the woman was not so remote in me as not to be roused by the woman. I wrote to Edbury, and to Heriot, bidding him call on the young nobleman. Late at night I was at my father's door to perform the act of duty of seeing him, and hearing how he had entertained Eckart, if he was still master of his liberty. I should have known him better: I expected silence and gloom. The windows were lighted brilliantly. As the hall-door opened, a band of stringed and wood instruments commenced an overture. Mrs. Waddy came

to me in the hall; she was unintelligible. One thing had happened to him at one hour of the morning, and another at another hour. He was at one moment suffering the hands of the 'officers' on his shoulder: 'And behold you, Mr. Harry! a knock, a letter from a messenger, and he conquers Government!' It struck me that the epitome of his life had been played in a day: I was quite incredulous of downright good fortune. He had been giving a dinner followed by a concert, and the deafening strains of the music clashed with my acerb spirit, irritating me excessively. 'Where are those men you spoke of?' I asked her. 'Gone,' she replied,—'gone long ago!'

'Paid?' said I.

She was afraid to be precise, but repeated that they were long since gone.

I singled Jorian DeWitt from among the crowd of loungers on the stairs and landing between the drawing-rooms. 'Oh, yes, Government has struck its flag to him,' Jorian said. 'Why weren't you here to dine? Alphonse will never beat his achievement of to-day. Jenny and Carigny gave us a quarter-of-an-hour before dinner—a capital idea!—"VEUVE ET BACHELIER." As if by inspiration. No preparation for it, no formal taking of seats. It seized amazingly—floated small talk over the soup beautifully.'

I questioned him again.

'Oh, dear, yes; there can't be a doubt about it,' he answered, airily. 'Roy Richmond has won his game.'

Two or three urgent men round a great gentleman were extracting his affable approbation of the admirable nature of the experiment of the Chassediane before dinner. I saw that Eckart was comfortably seated, and telling Jorian to provide for him in the matter of tobacco, I went to my room, confused beyond power of thought

by the sensible command of fortune my father, fortune's sport at times, seemed really to have.

His statement of the circumstances bewildered me even more. He was in no hurry to explain them; when we met next morning he waited for me to question him, and said, 'Yes. I think we have beaten them so far!' His mind was pre-occupied, he informed me, concerning the defence of a lady much intrigued against, and resuming the subject: 'Yes, we have beaten them up to a point, Richie. And that reminds me: would you have me go down to Riversley and show the squire the transfer paper? At any rate you can now start for Sarkeld, and you do, do you not? To-day: to-morrow at latest.'

I insisted: 'But how, and in what manner has this money been paid?' The idea struck me that he had succeeded in borrowing it.

'Transferred to me in the Bank, and intelligence of the fact sent to Dettermain and Newson, my lawyers,' he replied. 'Beyond that, I know as little as you, Richie, though indubitably I hoped to intimidate them. If,' he added, with a countenance perfectly simple and frank, 'they expect me to take money for a sop, I am not responsible, as I by no means provoked it, for their mistake. I proceed. The money is useful to you, so I rejoice at it.'

Five and twenty thousand pounds was the amount.

'No stipulation was attached to it?'

'None. Of course a stipulation was implied: but of that I am not bound to be cognizant.'

'Absurd!' I cried: 'it can't have come from the quarter you suspect.'

'Where else?' he asked.

I thought of the squire, Lady Edbury, my aunt, Lady Sampleman, Anna Penrhys, some one or other of his

frantic female admirers. But the largeness of the amount, and the channel selected for the payment, precluded the notion that any single person had come to succour him in his imminent need, and, as it chanced, mine.

Observing that my speculations wavered, he cited numerous instances in his life of the special action of Providence in his favour, and was bold enough to speak of a star, which his natural acuteness would have checked his doing before me, if his imagination had not been seriously struck.

'You hand the money over to me, sir?' I said.

'Without a moment of hesitation, my dear boy,' he melted me by answering.

'You believe you have received a bribe?'

'That is my entire belief—the sole conclusion I can arrive at. I will tell you, Richie: the old Marquis of Edbury once placed five thousand pounds to my account on a proviso that I should—neglect, is the better word, my Case. I inherited from him at his death; of course his demise cancelled the engagement. He had been the friend of personages implicated. He *knew*. I suspect he apprehended the unpleasant position of a witness.'

'But what was the stipulation you presume was implied?' said I.

'Something that passed between lawyers: I am not bound to be cognizant of it. Abandon my claims for a few thousands? Not for ten, not for ten hundred times the sum!'

To be free from his boisterous influence, which made my judgement as unsteady as the weather-glass in a hurricane, I left my house and went straight to Dettermain and Newson, who astonished me quite as much by assuring me that the payment of the money was a fact. There was no mystery about it. The intelligence and

transfer papers, they said, had not been communicated to them by the firm they were opposed to, but by a solicitor largely connected with the aristocracy ; and his letter had briefly declared the unknown donator's request that legal proceedings should forthwith be stopped. They offered no opinion of their own. Suggestions of any kind, they seemed to think, had weight, and all of them an equal weight, to conclude from the value they assigned to every idea of mine. The name of the solicitor in question was Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge. It was, indeed, my old, one of my oldest friends ; the same by whom I had been led to a feast and an evening of fun when a little fellow starting in the London streets. Sure of learning the whole truth from old Mr. Bannerbridge, I walked to his office and heard that he had suddenly been taken ill. I strode on to his house, and entered a house of mourning. The kind old man, remembered by me so vividly, had died overnight. Miss Bannerbridge perceived that I had come on an errand, and with her gentle good breeding led me to speak of it. She knew nothing whatever of the sum of money. She was, however, aware that an annuity had been regularly paid through the intervention of her father. I was referred by her to a Mr. Richards, his recently-established partner. This gentleman was ignorant of the whole transaction.

Throughout the day I strove to combat the pressure of evidence in favour of the idea that an acknowledgement of special claims had been wrested from the enemy. Temple hardly helped me, though his solid sense was dead against the notions entertained by my father and Jorian DeWitt, and others besides, our elders. The payment of the sum through the same channel which supplied the annuity, pointed distinctly to an admission of a claim, he inclined to think, and should be supposed to come from a personage having cause either to fear him

or to assist him. He set my speculations astray by hinting that the request for the stopping of the case might be a blind. A gift of money, he said shrewdly, was a singularly weak method of inducing a man to stop the suit of a life-time. I thought of Lady Edbury; but her income was limited, and her expenditure was not: —of Lady Sampleman, but it was notorious that she loved her purse as well as my aunt Dorothy, and was even more, in the squire's phrase, 'a petticoated parsimony.' Anna Penrhys appeared the likelier, except for the fact that the commencement of the annuity was long before our acquaintance with her. I tried her on the subject. Her amazement was without a shadow of reserve. 'It 's Welsh, it 's not English,' she remarked. I knew no Welshwoman save Anna. 'Do you know the whole of his history?' said she. Possibly one of the dozen unknown episodes in it might have furnished the clue, I agreed with her.

The sight of twenty-one thousand pounds placed to my credit in the Funds assuaged my restless spirit of investigation. Letters from the squire and my aunt Dorothy urged me to betake myself to Riversley, there finally to decide upon what my course should be.

'Now that you have the money, pray,' St. Parsimony wrote,—'pray, be careful of it. Do not let it be encroached on. Remember it is to serve one purpose. It should be guarded strictly against every appeal for aid,' etc., with much underlining.

My grandfather returned the papers. His letter said: 'I shall not break my word. Please to come and see me before you take steps right or left.'

So here was the dawn again.

I could in a day or two start for Sarkeld. Meanwhile, to give my father a lesson, I discharged a number of bills, and paid off the bond to which Edbury's name was

attached. My grandfather, I knew, was too sincerely and punctiliously a gentleman in practical conduct to demand a further inspection of my accounts. These things accomplished, I took the train for Riversley, and proceeded from the station to Durstan, where I knew Heriot to be staying. Had I gone straight to my grandfather, there would have been another story to tell.

CHAPTER XLV

WITHIN AN INCH OF MY LIFE

A SINGLE tent stood in a gully running from one of the gravel-pits of the heath, near an iron-red rillet, and a girl of Kiomi's tribe leaned over the lazy water at half length, striking it with her handkerchief. At a distance of about twice a stone's-throw from the new carriage-road between Durstan and Bulsted, I fancied from old recollections she might be Kiomi herself. This was not the time for her people to be camping on Durstan. Besides, I feared it improbable that one would find her in any of the tracks of her people. The noise of the wheels brought the girl's face round to me. She was one of those who were babies in the tents when I was a boy. We were too far apart for me to read her features. I lay back in the carriage, thinking that it would have been better for my poor little wild friend if I had never crossed the shadow of her tents. A life caught out of its natural circle is as much in danger of being lost as a limb given to a wheel in spinning machinery ; so it occurred to me, until I reflected that Prince Ernest might make the same remark, and deplore the damage done to the superior machinery likewise.

My movements appeared to interest the girl. She was up on a mound of the fast-purpling heath, shading her eyes to watch me, when I called at Bulsted lodge-gates to ask for a bed under Julia's roof that night. Her bare legs twinkled in a nimble pace on the way to Durstan Hall, as if she was determined to keep me in sight. I waved my hand to her. She stopped. A gipsy girl's figure is often as good an index to her mind as her face, and I perceived that she had not taken my greeting favourably ; nor would she advance a step to my repeated beckonings ; I tried hat, handkerchief, purse, in vain. My driver observed that she was taken with a fit of the obstinacy of 'her lot.' He shouted, 'Silver,' and then 'Fortune.' She stood looking. The fellow discoursed on the nature of gipsies. Foxes were kept for hunting, he said ; there was reason in that. Why we kept gipsies none could tell. He once backed a gipsy prizefighter, who failed to keep his appointment. 'Heart sunk too low below his belt, sir. You can't reckon on them for performances. And that same man afterwards fought the gamest fight in the chronicles o' the Ring ! I knew he had it in him. But they 're like nothing better than the weather ; you can't put money on 'em and feel safe.' Consequently he saw no good in them.

'She sticks to her post,' he said, as we turned into the Durstan grounds. The girl was like a flag-staff on the upper line of heathland.

Heriot was strolling, cigar in mouth, down one of the diminutive alleys of young fir in this upstart estate. He affected to be prepossessed by the case between me and Edbury, and would say nothing of his own affairs, save that he meant to try for service in one of the Continental armies ; he whose susceptible love for his country was almost a malady. But he had given himself to women : it was Cissy this, Trichy that, and the wiles of a Florence,

the spites of an Agatha, duperies, innocent-seemings, witcheries, reptile-tricks of the fairest of women, all through his conversation. He had so saturated himself with the resources, evasions, and desperate cruising of these light creatures of wind, tide, and tempest, that, like one who has been gazing on the whirligoround, he saw the whole of women running or only waiting for a suitable partner to run the giddy ring to perdition and an atoning pathos.

I cut short one of Heriot's narratives by telling him that this picking bones of the dish was not to my taste. He twitted me with turning parson. I spoke of Kiomi. Heriot flushed, muttering, 'The little devil!' with his usual contemplative relish of devilry. We parted, feeling that severe tension of the old links keeping us together which indicates the lack of new ones: a point where simple affection must bear the strain of friendship if it can. Heriot had promised to walk half-way with me to Bulsted, in spite of Lady Maria's childish fears of some attack on him. He was now satisfied with a good-bye at the hall-doors, and he talked ostentatiously of a method he had to bring Edbury up to the mark. I knew that same loud decreeing talk to be a method on his own behalf of concealing his sensitive resentment at the tone I had adopted. Lady Maria's carriage had gone to fetch her husband from a political dinner. My portmanteau advised me to wait for its return. Durstan and Riversley were at feud, however, owing to some powerful rude English used toward the proprietor of the former place by the squire; so I thought it better to let one of the grooms shoulder my luggage, and follow him.

The night was dark; he chose the roadway, and I crossed the heath, meeting an exhilarating high wind that made my blood race. Egoism is not peculiar to

any period of life ; it is only especially curious in a young man beginning to match himself against his elders, for in him it suffuses the imagination ; he is not merely selfishly sentient, or selfishly scheming : his very conceptions are selfish. I remember walking at my swiftest pace, blaming everybody I knew for insufficiency, for want of subordination to my interests, for poverty of nature, grossness, blindness to the fine lights shining in me ; I blamed the Fates for harassing me, circumstances for not surrounding me with friends worthy of me. The central *I* resembled the sun of this universe, with the difference that it shrieked for nourishment, instead of dispensing it.

My monstrous conceit of elevation will not suffer condensation into sentences. What I can testify to is, that for making you bless the legs you stand on, a knock-down blow is a specific. I had it before I knew that a hand was up. I should have fancied that I had run athwart a tree, but for the recollection, as I was reeling to the ground, of a hulk of a fellow suddenly fronting me, and he did not hesitate with his fist. I went over and over into a heathery hollow. The wind sang shrill through the furzes ; nothing was visible but black clumps, black cloud. Astonished though I was, and shaken, it flashed through me that this was not the attack of a highwayman. He calls upon you to stand and deliver : it is a foe that hits without warning. The blow took me on the forehead, and might have been worse. Not seeing the enemy, curiosity was almost as strong in me as anger ; but reflecting that I had injured no one I knew of, my nerves were quickly at the right pitch. Brushing some spikes of furze off my hands, I prepared for it. A cry rose. My impression seemed to be all backward, travelling up to me a moment or two behind time. I recognised a strange tongue in the cry,

but too late that it was Romany to answer it. Instantly a voice was audible above the noisy wind :—' I spot him.' Then began some good and fair fighting. I got my footing on grass, and liked the work. The fellow facing me was unmistakably gipsy-build. I, too, had length of arm, and a disposition to use it by hitting straight out, with footing firm, instead of dodging and capering, which told in my favour, and is decidedly the best display of the noble art on a dark night.

My dancer went over as neatly as I had preceded him ; and therewith I considered enough was done for vengeance. The thrill of a salmon on the gut is known to give a savage satisfaction to our original nature ; it is but an extension and attenuation of the hearty contentment springing from a thorough delivery of the fist upon the prominent features of an assailant that yields to it perforce. Even when you receive such perfect blows you are half satisfied. Feeling conqueror, my wrath was soothed ; I bent to have a look at my ruffian, and ask him what cause of complaint gipsies camping on Durstan could find against Riversley. A sharp stroke on the side of my neck sent me across his body. He bit viciously. In pain and desperation I flew at another of the tawny devils. They multiplied. I took to my heels ; but this was the vainest of stratagems, they beat me in nimbleness. Four of them were round me when I wheeled breathless to take my chance at fighting the odds. Fiery men have not much notion of chivalry : gipsies the least of all. They yelled disdain of my summons to them to come on one by one : ' Now they had caught me, now they would pay me, now they would pound me ' ; and, standing at four corners, they commended me to think of becoming a jelly. Four though they were, they kept their positions ; they left it to me to rush in for a close ; the hinder ones held out of arms' reach so long as

I was disengaged. I had perpetually to shift my front, thinking—Oh, for a stick ! any stout bit of timber ! My fists ached, and a repetition of nasty dull knocks on back and neck, slogging thumps dealt by men getting to make sure of me, shattered my breathing.

I cried out for a pause, offered to take a couple of them at a time : I challenged three—the fourth to bide. I was now the dancer : left, right, and roundabout I had to swing, half-stunned, half-strangled with gorge. Those terrible blows in the back did the mischief. Sickness threatened to undermine me. Boxers have breathing-time : I had none. Stiff and sick, I tried to run ; I tottered, I stood to be knocked down, I dropped like a log—careless of life. But I smelt earth keenly, and the damp grass and the devil's play of their feet on my chin, chest, and thighs, revived a fit of wrath enough to set me staggering on my legs again. They permitted it, for the purpose of battering me further. I passed from down to up mechanically, and enjoyed the chestful of air given me in the interval of rising : thought of Germany and my father, and Janet at her window, complacently ; raised a child's voice in my throat for mercy, quite inaudible, and accepted my punishment. One idea I had was, that I could not possibly fail as a speaker after this —I wanted but a minute's grace to fetch breath for an oration, beginning, ' You fools ! ' for I guessed that they had fallen upon the wrong man. Not a second was allowed. Soon the shrewd physical bracing, acting momentarily on my brain, relaxed ; the fitful illumination ceased : all ideas faded out—clung about my beaten body—fled. The body might have been tossed into its grave, for aught I knew.

CHAPTER XLVI

AMONG GIPSY WOMEN

I CANNOT say how long it was after my senses had gone when I began to grope for them on the warmest of heaving soft pillows, and lost the slight hold I had on them with the effort. Then came a series of climbings and fallings, risings to the surface and sinkings fathoms below. Any attempt to speculate pitched me back into darkness. Gifted with a pair of enormous eyes, which threw surrounding objects to a distance of a mile away, I could not induce the diminutive things to approach; and shutting eyes led to such a rolling of mountains in my brain, that, terrified by the gigantic revolution, I lay determinedly staring; clothed, it seemed positive, in a tight-fitting suit of sheet-lead; but why? I wondered why, and immediately received an extinguishing blow. My pillow was heavenly; I was constantly being cooled on it, and grew used to hear a croon no more musical than the unstopped reed above my head; a sound as of a breeze about a cavern's mouth, more soothing than a melody. Conjecture of my state, after hovering timidly in dread of relapses, settled and assured me I was lying baked, half-buried in an old river-bed; moss at my cheek, my body inextricable; water now and then feebly striving to float me out, with horrid pain, with infinite refreshingness. A shady light, like the light through leafage, I could see; the water I felt. Why did it keep trying to move me? I questioned and sank to the depths again.

The excruciated patient was having his wet bandages

folded across his bruises, and could not bear a motion of the mind.

The mind's total apathy was the sign of recovering health. Kind nature put that district to sleep while she operated on the disquieted lower functions. I looked on my later self as one observes the mossy bearded substances travelling blind along the under-current of the stream, clinging to this and that, twirling absurdly.

Where was I ? Not in a house. But for my condition of absolute calm, owing to skilful treatment, open air, and physical robustness, the scene would have been of a kind to scatter the busy little workmen setting up the fabric of my wits. A lighted oil-cup stood on a tripod in the middle of a tent-roof, and over it the creased neck and chin of a tall old woman, splendid in age, reddened vividly ; her black eyes and grey brows, and greyish-black hair fell away in a dusk of their own. I thought her marvellous. Something she held in her hands that sent a thin steam between her and the light. Outside, in the A cutting of the tent's threshold, a heavy-coloured sunset hung upon dark land. My pillow meantime lifted me gently at a regular measure, and it was with untroubled wonder that I came to the knowledge of a human heart beating within it. So soft could only be feminine ; so firm still young. The bosom was Kiomi's. A girl sidled at the opening of the tent, peeping in, and from a muffled rattle of subpectoral thunder discharged at her in quick heated snaps, I knew Kiomi's voice. After an altercation of their monotonous gipsy under-tones, the girl dropped and crouched outside.

It was morning when I woke next, stronger, and aching worse. I was lying in the air, and she who served for nurse, pillow, parasol, and bank of herbage, had her arms round beneath mine cherishingly, all the fingers

outspread and flat on me, just as they had been when I went to sleep.

'Kiomi!'

'Now, you be quiet.'

'Can I stand up a minute or two?'

'No, and you won't talk.'

I submitted. This was our duel all day: she slipped from me only twice, and when she did the girl took her place.

I began to think of Bulsted and Riversley.

'Kiomi, how long have I been here?'

'You 'll be twice as long as you 've been.'

'A couple of days?'

'More like a dozen.'

'Just tell me what happened.'

'Ghm—m—m,' she growled admonishingly.

Reflecting on it, I felt sure there must have been searching parties over the heath.

'Kiomi, I say, how was it they missed me?'

She struck at once on my thought.

'They 're fools.'

'How did you cheat them?'

'I didn't tie a handkercher across their eyes.'

'You half smothered me once, in the combe.'

'You go to sleep.'

'Have you been doctor?'

The growling tigerish 'Ghm—m—m' constrained me to take it for a lullaby.

'Kiomi, why the deuce did your people attack me?'

She repeated the sound resembling that which sometimes issues from the vent of a mine; but I insisted upon her answering.

'I 'll put you down and be off,' she threatened.

'Brute of a girl! I hate you!'

'Hate away.'

'Tell me who found me.'

'I shan't. You shut your peepers.'

The other and younger girl sung out: 'I found *you*.'

Kiomi sent a volley at her.

'I did,' said the girl; 'yes, and I nursed you first, I did; and mother doctored you. Kiomi hasn't been here a day.'

The old mother came out of the tent. She felt my pulse, and forthwith squatted in front of me. 'You 're hard to kill, and oily as a bean,' said she. 'You 've only to lie quiet in the sun like a handsome gentleman; I 'm sure you couldn't wish for more. Air and water 's the doctor for such as you. You 've got the bound in you to jump the ditch: don't you fret at it, or you 'll lose your spring, my good gentleman.'

'Leave off talking to me as a stranger,' I bawled. 'Out with it; why have you kept me here? Why did your men pitch into me?'

'*Our* men, my good gentleman!' the old woman ejaculated. There was innocence indeed! sufficient to pass the whole tribe before a bench of magistrates. She wheedled: 'What have they against a handsome gentleman like you? They 'd run for you fifty mile a day, and show you all their tricks and secrets for nothing.'

My despot Kiomi fired invectives at her mother. The old mother retorted; the girl joined in. All three were scowling, flashing, showing teeth, driving the wordy javelin upon one another, indiscriminately, or two to one, without a pause; all to a sound like the slack silver string of the fiddle.

I sang out truce to them; they racked me with laughter; and such laughter!—the shaking of husks in a half-empty sack.

Ultimately, on a sudden cessation of the storm of tongues, they agreed that I must have my broth.

Sheer weariness, seasoned with some hope that the broth would give me strength to mount on my legs and walk, persuaded me to drink it. Still the old mother declared that none of her men would ever have laid hands on me. Why should they? she asked. What had I done to them? Was it their way?

Kiomi's arms tightened over my breast. The involuntary pressure was like an illumination to me.

No longer asking for the grounds of the attack on a mistaken person, and bowing to the fiction that none of the tribe had been among my assailants, I obtained information. The girl Eveleen had spied me entering Durstan. Quite by chance, she was concealed near Bulsted Park gates when the groom arrived and told the lodge-keeper that Mr. Harry Richmond was coming up over the heath, and might have lost his way. 'Richmond!' the girl threw a world of meaning into the unexpected name. Kiomi clutched me to her bosom, but no one breathed the name we had in our thoughts.

Eveleen and the old mother had searched for me upon the heath, and having haled me head and foot to their tent, despatched a message to bring Kiomi down from London to aid them in their desperate shift. They knew Squire Beltham's temper. He would have scattered the tribe to the shores of the kingdom at a rumour of foul play to his grandson. Kiomi came in time to smuggle me through an inspection of the tent and cross-examination of its ostensible denizens by Captain Bulsted, who had no suspicions, though he was in a state of wonderment. Hearing all this, I was the first to say it would be better I should get out of the neighbourhood as soon as my legs should support me. The grin that goes for a laugh among gipsies followed my question of how Kiomi had managed to smuggle me. Eveleen was my informant

when the dreaded Kiomi happened to be off duty for a minute. By a hasty transformation, due to a nightcap on the bandages about the head, and an old petticoat over my feet, Captain William's insensible friend was introduced to him as the sore sick great-grandmother of the tribe, mother of Kiomi's mother, aged ninety-one. The captain paid like a man for doctor and burial fees; he undertook also to send the old lady a pound of snuff to assist her to a last sneeze or two on the right side of the grave, and he kept his word; for, deeming it necessary to paint her in a characteristic, these prodigious serpents told him gravely that she delighted in snuff; it was almost the only thing that kept her alive, barring a sip of broth. Captain William's comment on the interesting piece of longevity whose well-covered length and framework lay exposed to his respectful contemplation, was, that she must have been a devilish fine old lady in her day. 'Six foot' was given as her measurement.

One pound of snuff, a bottle of rum, and five sovereigns were the fruits of the captain's sensibility. I shattered my ribs with laughter over the story. Eveleen dwelt on the triumph, twinkling. Kiomi despised laughter or triumph resulting from the natural exercise of craft in an emergency. 'But my handsome gentleman he won't tell on us, will he, when we 've nursed him and doctored him, and made him one of us, and as good a stick o' timber as grows in the forest?' whined the old mother. I had to swear I would not. 'He!' cried Kiomi. 'He may forget us when he 's gone,' the mother said. She would have liked me to kiss a book to seal the oath. Anxiety about the safety of their 'homes,' that is, the assurance of an untroubled reception upon their customary camping-grounds, is a peculiarity of the gipsies, distinguishing them, equally with their cleanliness and thriftiness, from mumpers and the common wanderers.

It is their tribute to civilization, which generally keeps them within the laws.

Who that does not know them will believe that under their domestic system I had the best broth and the best tea I have ever tasted! They are very cunning brewers and sagacious buyers too; their maxims show them to direct all their acuteness upon obtaining quality for their money. A compliment not backed by silver is hardly intelligible to the pretty ones: money is a really credible thing to them; and when they have it, they know how to use it. Apparently because they know so well, so perfectly appreciating it, they have only vague ideas of a corresponding sentiment on the opposite side to the bargain, and imagine that they fool people much more often than they succeed in doing. Once duped themselves, they are the wariest of the dog-burnt; the place is notched where it occurred, and for ever avoided. On the other hand, they repose implicit faith in a reputation vouched for by their experience. I was amused by the girl Eveleen's dotting of houses over the breadth of five counties, where for this and that article of apparel she designed to expend portions of a golden guinea, confident that she would get the very best, and a shilling besides. The unwonted coin gave her the joy of supposing she cheated the Mint of that sum. This guinea was a present to the girl (to whom I owed my thrashing, by the way) that excused itself under cover of being a bribe for sight of a mirror interdicted by the implacable Kiomi. I wanted to have a look at my face. Now that the familiar scenes were beginning to wear their original features to me, my dread of personal hideousness was distressing, though Eveleen declared the bad blood in my cheeks and eyes 'had been sucked by pounds of red meat.' I wondered, whether if I stood up and walked to either one of the three great halls lying in an obtuse

triangle within view, I should easily be recognized. When I did see myself, I groaned verily. With the silence of profound resignation, I handed back to Eveleen the curious fragment of her boudoir, which would have grimaced at Helen of Troy.

'You 're feeling your nose—you 've been looking at a glass!' Kiomi said, with supernatural swiftness of deduction on her return.

She added for my comfort that nothing was broken, but confessed me to be still 'a sight'; and thereupon drove knotty language at Eveleen. The girl retorted, and though these two would never acknowledge to me that any of their men had been in this neighbourhood recently, the fact was treated as a matter of course in their spiteful altercation, and each saddled the other with the mistake they had committed. Eveleen snatched the last word. What she said I did not comprehend, she must have hit hard. Kiomi's eyes lightened, and her lips twitched; she coloured like the roofing smoke of the tent fire; twice she showed her teeth, as in a spasm, struck to the heart, unable to speak, breathing in and out of a bitterly disjoined mouth. Eveleen ran. I guessed at the ill-word spoken. Kiomi sat eyeing the wood-ashes, a devouring gaze that shot straight and read but one thing. They who have seen wild creatures die will have her before them, saving the fiery eyes. She became an ashen-colour, I took her little hand. Unconscious of me, her brown fingers clutching at mine, she flung up her nostrils, craving air.

This was the picture of the woman who could not weep in her misery.

'Kiomi, old friend!' I called to her. I could have cursed that other friend, the son of mischief; for she, I could have sworn, had been fiercely and wantonly hunted. Chastity of nature, intense personal pride, were as proper

"Kiomi old friend!"
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to her as the free winds are to the heaths : they were as visible to dull divination as the milky blue about the iris of her eyeballs. She had actually no animal vileness, animal though she might be termed, and would have appeared if compared with Heriot's admirable Cissies and Gwennies, and other ladies of the Graces that run to fall, and spend their pains more in kindling the scent of the huntsman than in effectively flying.

There was no consolation for her.

The girl Eveleen came in sight, loitering and looking, kicking her idle heels.

Kiomi turned sharp round to me.

'I 'm going. Your father 's here, up at Bulsted. I 'll see him. He won't tell. He 'll come soon. You 'll be fit to walk in a day. You 're sound as a nail. Good-bye—I shan't say good-bye twice,' she answered my attempt to keep her, and passed into the tent, out of which she brought a small bundle tied in a yellow handkerchief, and walked away, without nodding or speaking.

'What was that you said to Kiomi ?' I questioned Eveleen, who was quickly beside me.

She replied, accurately or not : 'I told her our men 'd give her as good as she gave me, let her wait and see.'

Therewith she pouted ; or, to sketch her with precision, 'snouted' would better convey the vivacity of her ugly flash of features. It was an error in me to think her heartless. She talked of her aunt Kiomi affectionately, for a gipsy girl, whose modulated tones are all addressed to the soft public. Eveleen spoke with the pride of bated breath of the ferocious unforgivingness of their men. Perhaps if she had known that I traced the good repute of the tribes for purity to the sweeter instincts of the women, she would have eulogized her sex to amuse me. Gipsy girls, like other people, are fond of showing off ;

but it would have been a victory of education to have helped her to feel the distinction of the feminine sense of shame half as awfully and warmly as she did the inscrutable iron despotism of the males. She hinted that the mistake of which I had been the victim would be rectified.

'Tell your men I 'll hunt them down like rats if I hear of it,' said I.

While we were conversing my father arrived. Eveleen, not knowing him, would have had me accept the friendly covering of a mat.

'Here 's a big one! he 's a clergyman,' she muttered to herself, and ran to him and set up a gipsy whine, fronting me up to the last step while she advanced; she only yielded ground to my outcry.

My father bent over me. Kiomi had prepared him for what he saw. I quieted his alarm by talking currently and easily. Julia Bulsted had despatched a messenger to inform him of my mysterious disappearance; but he, as his way was, revelling in large conjectures, had half imagined me seized by a gust of passion, and bound for Germany. 'Without my luggage?' I laughed.

'Ay, without your luggage, Richie,' he answered seriously. His conceit of a better knowledge of me than others possessed, had buoyed him up. 'For I knew,' he said, 'we two do nothing like the herd of men. I thought you were off to her, my boy. Now!' he looked at me, and this look of dismay was a perfect mirror. I was not a presentable object.

He stretched his limbs on the heather and kept hold of my hand, looking and talking watchfully, doctor-like, doubting me to be as sound in body as I assured him I was, despite aches and pains. Eveleen hung near.

'These people have been kind to you?' he said.

'No, the biggest brutes on the earth,' said I.

'Oh! you say that, when I spotted you out in the dark where you might have lied to be eaten, and carried you and washed your bloody face, and watched you, and never slept, I didn't, to mother you and wet your head!' cried the girl.

My father beckoned to her and thanked her appreciably in the yellow tongue.

'So these scoundrels of the high road fell upon you and robbed you, Richie?'

I nodded.

'You let him think they robbed you, and you had your purse to give me a gold guinea out of it!' Eveleen cried, and finding herself in the wrong track, volubly resumed: 'That they didn't, for they hadn't time, whether they meant to, and the night black as a coal, whoever they were.'

The mystery of my not having sent word to Bulsted or to Riversley perplexed my father.

'Comfortable here!' he echoed me, disconsolately, and glanced at the heath, the tent, the black circle of the broth-pot, and the wild girl.

CHAPTER XLVII

MY FATHER ACTS THE CHARMER AGAIN

Kiomi's mother was seen in a turn of the gravel-cutting, bearing purchases from Durstan village. She took the new circumstances in with a single cast up of her wary eyelids; and her, and her skill in surgery and art in medicine, I praised to lull her fears, which procured me the denomination of old friend, as well as handsome gentleman: she went so far as to add, in a fit of natural

warmth, nice fellow ; and it is the truth, that this term effected wonders in flattering me : it seemed to reveal to me how simple it was for Harry Richmond, one whom gipsies could think a nice fellow, to be the lord of Janet's affections—to be her husband. My heart throbbed ; yet she was within range of a mile and a half, and I did not wish to be taken to her. I did wish to smell the piney air about the lake-palace ; but the thought of Ottilia caused me no quick pulsations.

My father remained an hour. He could not perceive the drift of my objection to go either to Bulsted or to Riversley, and desire that my misadventure should be unknown at those places. However, he obeyed me, as I could always trust him to do scrupulously, and told a tale at Bulsted. In the afternoon he returned in a carriage to convey me to the seaside. When I was raised I fainted, and saw the last of the camp on Durstan much as I had come to it first. Sickness and swimming of the head continued for several days. I was persecuted with the sensation of the carriage journey, and an iteration of my father's that ran : ' My son's inanimate body in my arms,' or ' Clasping the lifeless body of my sole son, Harry Richmond,' and other variations. I said nothing about it. He told me aghast that I had spat blood. A battery of eight fists, having it in the end all its own way, leaves a deeper indentation on its target than a pistol-shot that passes free of the vital chords. My convalescence in Germany was a melody compared with this. I ought to have stopped in the tent, according to the wise old mother's advice, given sincerely, for prudence counselled her to strike her canvas and be gone. There I should have lain, interested in the progress of a bee, the course of a beetle or a cloud, a spider's business, and the shaking of the gorse and the heather, until good health had grown out of thoughtlessness.

The very sight of my father was as a hive of humming troubles.

His intense anxiety about me reflected in my mind the endless worry I had concerning him. It was the intellect which condemned him when he wore a joyful air, and the sensations when he waxed over-solicitous. Whether or not the sentences were just, the judges should have sometimes shifted places. I was unable to divine why he fevered me so much. Must I say it ?—He had ceased to entertain me. Instead of a comic I found him a tragic spectacle ; and his exuberant anticipations, his bursting hopes that fed their forcing-bed with the blight and decay of their predecessors, his transient fits of despair after a touch at my pulses, and exclamation of ' Oh, Richie, Richie, if only I had my boy up and well ! ' —assuming that nothing but my tardy recovery stood in the way of our contentment—were examples of downright unreason such as contemplation through the comic glass would have excused ; the tragic could not. I knew, nevertheless, that to the rest of the world he was a progressive comedy : and the knowledge made him seem more tragic still. He clearly could not learn from misfortune ; he was not to be contained. Money I gave him freely, holding the money at my disposal his own ; I chafed at his unteachable spirit, surely one of the most tragical things in life ; and the proof of my love for him was that I thought it so, though I should have been kinder had he amused me, as in the old days.

Conceive to yourself the keeping watch over a fountain choked in its spouting, incessantly labouring to spirt a jet into the air ; now for a moment glittering and towering in a column, and once more straining to mount. My father appeared to me in that and other images. He would have had me believe him shooting to his zenith, victorious at last. I likewise was to reap a victory of the

highest kind from the attack of the mysterious ruffians; so much, he said, he thought he could assure me of. He chattered of an intimidated Government, and Dettermain and Newson; duchesses, dukes, most friendly; innumerable invitations to country castles; and among other things one which really showed him to be capable of conceiving ideas and working from an initiative. But this, too, though it accomplished a temporary service, he rendered illusory to me by his unhappy manner of regarding it as an instance of his now permanent social authority. He had instituted what he called his JURY OF HONOUR COURT, composed of the select gentlemen of the realm, ostensibly to weigh the causes of disputes between members of their class, and decree the method of settlement: but actually, my father admitted, to put a stop to the affair between Edbury and me.

'That was the origin of the notion, Richie. I carried it on. I dined some of the best men of our day. I seized the opportunity when our choicest "emperor" was rolling on wheels to propound my system. I mention the names of Bramham DeWitt, Colonel Hibbert Segrave, Lord Alonzo Carr, Admiral Loftus, the Earl of Luton, the Marquis of Hatchford, Jack Hippony, Monterez Williams,—I think you know him?—and little Dick Phillimore, son of a big-wig, a fellow of a capital wit and discretion; I mention them as present to convince you we are not triflers, dear boy. My argument ran, it is absurd to fight; also it is intolerable to be compelled to submit to insult. As the case stands, we are under a summary edict of the citizens, to whom chivalry is unknown. Well, well, I delivered a short speech. Fighting, I said, resembled butting,—a performance proper to creatures that grow horns instead of brains . . . not to allude to a multitude of telling remarks; and the question "Is man a fighting animal?" my answer being that he

is not born with spurs on his heels or horns to his head : and that those who insisted on fighting should be examined by competent anatomists, " ologists " of some sort, to decide whether they have the excrescences, and proclaim them . . . touching on these lighter parts of my theme with extreme delicacy. But—and here I dwelt on my point : Man, if not a fighting animal in his glorious—I forgot what—is a sensitive one, and has the idea of honour. " Hear," from Colonel Segrave, and Sir Weeton Slater—he was one of the party. In fine, Richie, I found myself wafted into a breathing oration. I cannot, I confess it humbly, hear your " hear, hear," without going up and off, inflated like a balloon. " Shall the arbitration of the magistracy, indemnifications in money awarded by the Law-courts, succeed in satisfying,"—but I declare to you, Richie, it was no platform speech. I know your term—" the chain-cable sentence." Nothing of the kind, I assure you. Plain sense, as from gentlemen to gentlemen. We require, I said, a protection that the polite world of Great Britain does not now afford us against the aggressions of the knave, the fool, and the brute. We establish a Court. We do hereby—no, no, not the " hereby " ; quite simply, Richie—pledge ourselves—I said some other word not " pledge " to use our utmost authority and influence to exclude from our circles persons refusing to make the reparation of an apology for wanton common insults : we renounce intercourse with men declining, when guilty of provoking the sentiment of hostility, to submit to the jurisdiction of our Court. All I want you to see is the notion. We raise the shield against the cowardly bully which the laws have raised against the bloody one. " And gentlemen," ' my father resumed his oration, forgetting my sober eye for a minute—' " Gentlemen, we are the ultimate Court of Appeal for men who cherish their honour, yet abstain from fastening it like

a millstone round the neck of their common-sense.'' Credit me, Richie, the proposition kindled. We cited Lord Edbury to appear before us, and I tell you we extracted an ample apology to you from that young nobleman. And let me add, one that I, that we, must impose it upon an old son to accept. He does! Come, come. And you shall see, Richie, society shall never repose an inert mass under my leadership. I cure it; I shake it and cure it.'

He promenaded the room, repeating: 'I do not say I am possessed of a panacea,' and bending to my chin as he passed; 'I maintain that I can and do fulfil the duties of my station, which is my element, attained in the teeth of considerable difficulties, as no other man could, be he prince or Prime Minister. Not one,' he flourished, stepping onward. 'And mind you, Richie, this,' he swung round, conscious as ever of the critic in me, though witless to correct his pomp of style, 'this is not self-glorification. I point you facts. I have a thousand schemes—projects. I recognize the value of early misfortune. The particular misfortune of princes born is that they know nothing of the world—babies! I grant you, babies. Now, I do. I have it on my thumbnail. I know its wants. And just as I succeeded in making you a member of our Parliament in assembly, and the husband of an hereditary princess—hear me—so will I make good my original determination to be in myself the fountain of our social laws, and leader. I have never, I believe—to speak conscientiously—failed in a thing I have once determined on.'

The single wish that I might be a boy again, to find pleasure in his talk, was all that remained to combat the distaste I had for such oppressive deliveries of a mind apparently as little capable of being seated as a bladder charged with gas. I thanked him for getting rid of

Edbury, and a touch of remorse pricked me, it is true, on his turning abruptly and saying: 'You see me in my nakedness, Richie. To you and my valet, the heart, the body!' He was too sympathetic not to have a keen apprehension of a state of hostility in one whom he loved. If I had inclined to melt, however, his next remark would have been enough to harden me: 'I have fought as many battles, and gained as startling victories as Napoleon Buonaparte; *he* was an upstart.' The word gave me a jerk.

Sometimes he would indulge me transparently in a political controversy, confessing that my dialectical dexterity went far to make a Radical of him. I had no other amusement, or I should have held my peace. I tried every argument I could think of to prove to him that there was neither honour, nor dignity, nor profit in aiming at titular distinctions not forced upon us by the circumstances of our birth. He kept his position with much sly fencing, approaching shrewdness; and, whatever I might say, I could not deny that a vile old knock-knee'd world, tugging its forelock to the look of rank and chink of wealth, backed him, if he chose to be insensible to radical dignity.

'In my time,' said he, 'all young gentlemen were born Tories. The doctor no more expected to see a Radical come into the world from a good family than a radish. But I discern you, my dear boy. Our reigning Families must now be active; they require the discipline I have undergone; and I also dine at aldermen's tables, and lay a foundation-stone—as Jorian says—with the facility of a hen-mother: *that* should not suffice them. 'Tis not sufficient for me. I lay my stone, eat my dinner, make my complimentary speech—and that is all that is expected of us; but I am fully aware we should do more. We must lead, or we are lost. Ay, and—to quote you—

a Lord Mayor's barge is a pretty piece of gilt for the festive and luxurious to run up the river Thames in and mark their swans. I am convinced there is something deep in that. But what am I to do ? Would you have me frown upon the people ? Richie, it is prudent—I maintain it righteous, nay, it is, I affirm positively, sovereign wisdom—to cultivate every flower in the British bosom. Riposte me—have you too many ? Say yes, and you pass my guard. You cannot. I fence you there. This British loyalty is, in my estimation, absolutely beautiful. We grow to a head in our old England. The people have an eye ! I need no introduction to them. We reciprocate a highly cordial feeling when they line the streets and roads with respectful salutations, and I acknowledge their demonstrative goodwill. These things make us a nation. By heaven, Richie, you are, on this occasion, if your dad may tell you so, wrong. I ask pardon for my bluntness ; but I put it to you, could we, not travelling as personages in our well-beloved country, count on civility to greet us everywhere ? Assuredly not. My position is, that by consenting to their honest enthusiasm, we—the identical effect you are perpetually crying out for—we civilize them, we civilize them. Goodness !—a Great Britain without Royalty ! '

He launched on a series of desolate images. In the end, he at least persuaded himself that he had an idea in his anxiety to cultivate the primary British sentiment.

We moved from town to town along the South coast ; but it was vain to hope we might be taken for simple people. Nor was he altogether to blame, except in allowing the national instinct for ' worship and reverence ' to air itself unrebuked. I fled to the island. Temple ran down to meet me there, and I heard that Janet had written to him for news of me. He entered our hotel a private

person ; when he passed out, hats flew off before him. The modest little fellow went along a double line of attentive observers on the pier, and came back, asking me in astonishment who he was supposed to be.

'I petitioned for privacy here ! ' exclaimed my father. It accounted for the mystery.

Temple knew my feelings, and did but glance at me.

Close upon Temple's arrival we had a strange couple of visitors. 'Mistress Dolly Disher and her husband,' my father introduced them. She called him by one of his Christian names inadvertently at times. The husband was a confectioner, a satisfied shade of a man who reserved the exercise of his will for his business, we learnt ; she, a bustling, fresh-faced woman of forty-five, with still expressive dark eyes, and, I guessed, the ideal remainder of a passion in her bosom. The guess was no great hazard. She was soon sitting beside me, telling me of the 'years' she had known my father, and of the most affectionate friend and perfect gentleman he was : of the ladies who had been in love with him ; 'no wonder' : and of his sorrows and struggles, and his beautiful voice, and hearts that bled for him ; and of one at least who prayed and trusted he would be successful at last.

Temple and the pallid confectioner spent the day on board a yacht with my father. Mrs. Dolly stayed to nurse me and persuade me to swallow medicine. She talked of her youth, when, as a fashionable bootmaker's daughter, she permitted no bills to be sent in to Mr. Richmond, alleging, as a sufficient reason for it to her father, that their family came from Richmond in Yorkshire. Eventually, the bills were always paid. She had not been able to manage her husband so well ; and the consequence was, that (she breathed low) an execution was out ; 'though I tell him,' she said tremulously,

'he 's sure to be paid in the long run, if only he 'll wait. But no; he is you cannot think how obstinate in his business. And my girl Augusta waiting for Mr. Roy Richmond, the wish of our hearts! to assist at her wedding; and can we ask it, and have an execution hanging over him? And for all my husband 's a guest here, he 's as likely as not to set the officers at work, do what I will, to-morrow or any day. Your father invited us, Mr. Harry. I forced my husband to come, hoping against hope; for your papa gave the orders, relying on me, as he believed he might, and my husband undertook them, all through me. There it stops; he hears reports, and he takes fright: in goes the bill: then it 's law, and last—— Oh! I 'm ashamed.'

Mr. Disher's bill was for supplying suppers to the Balls. He received my cheque for the amount in full, observing that he had been confident his wife was correct when she said it would be paid, but a tradesman's business was to hasten the day of payment; and, for a penance, he himself would pacify the lawyers.

On hearing of the settlement of Mr. Disher's claim, my father ahem'd, speechless, which was a sign of his swallowing vexation. He remarked that I had, no doubt with the best intentions, encroached on his liberty. 'I do not like to have my debts disturbed.' He put it to me, whether a man, carrying out a life-long plan, would not be disconcerted by the friendliest intervention. This payment to Disher he pronounced fatal in policy. 'You have struck a heavy blow to my credit, Richie. Good little Mistress Dolly brought the man down here—no select addition to our society—and we were doing our utmost to endure him, as the ladies say, for the very purpose . . . but the error stands committed! For the future, friend Disher will infallibly expect payments within the year. Credit for suppers is the guarantee of

unlimited entertainments. And I was inspiring him with absolute confidence for next year's campaign. Money, you are aware, is no longer a question to terrify me. I hold proofs that I have conclusively frightened Government, and you know it. But this regards the manipulation of the man Disher. He will now dictate to me. A refresher of a few hundreds would have been impolitic to this kind of man; but the entire sum!—and to a creditor in arms! You reverse the proper situations of gentleman and tradesman. My supper-man, in particular, should be taught to understand that he is bound up in my success. Something frightened him; he proceeded at law; and now we have shown him that he has frightened *us*. An execution? My dear boy, I have danced an execution five years running, and ordered, consecutively, at the same house. Like other matters, an execution depends upon how you treat it. The odds are that we have mortally offended Mistress Dolly.' He apologized for dwelling on the subject, with the plea that it was an essential part of his machinery of action, and the usual comparison of 'the sagacious General' whose forethought omitted no minutiæ. I had to listen.

The lady professed to be hurt. The payment, however, put an end to the visit of this couple. Politic or not, it was a large sum to disburse, and once more my attention became fixed on the probable display of figures in my bankers' book. Bonds and bills were falling due: the current expenses were exhausting. I tried to face the evil, and take a line of conduct, staggering, as I did on my feet. Had I been well enough, I believe I should have gone to my grandfather, to throw myself on his good-nature; such was the brain's wise counsel: but I was all nerves and alarms, insomuch that I interdicted Temple's writing to Janet, lest it should bring on me letters from my aunt Dorothy, full of advice that could no longer be

followed, well-meant cautions that might as well be addressed to the mile-posts behind me. Moreover, Janet would be flying on the wind to me, and I had a craving for soft arms and the look of her eyebrows, that warned me to keep her off if I intended to act as became a man of good faith.

Fair weather, sunny green sea-water speckled with yachts shooting and bounding, and sending me the sharp sense of life there is in dashed-up fountains of silvery salt-spray, would have quickened my blood sooner but for this hot-bed of fruitless adventure, tricksy precepts, and wisdom turned imp, in which my father had again planted me. To pity him seemed a childish affectation. His praise of my good looks pleased me, for on that point he was fitted to be a judge, and I was still fancying I had lost them on the heath. Troops of the satellites of his grand parade surrounded him. I saw him walk down the pier like one breaking up a levée. At times he appeared to me a commanding phantasm in the midst of phantasm figures of great ladies and their lords, whose names he told off on his return like a drover counting his herd ; but within range of his eye and voice the reality of him grew overpowering. It seduced me, and, despite reason, I began to feel warm under his compliments. He was like wine. Gaiety sprang under his feet. Sitting at my window, I thirsted to see him when he was out of sight, and had touches of the passion of my boyhood.

I listened credulously, too, as in the old days, when he repeated, ' You will find I am a magician, and very soon, Richie, mark me.' His manner hinted that there was a surprise in store. ' You have not been on the brink of the grave for nothing.' He resembled wine in the other conditions attached to its rare qualities. Oh for the choice of having only a little of him, instead of having him on my heart ! The unfilial wish attacked me fre-

quently : he could be, and was, so ravishing to strangers and light acquaintances. Did by chance a likeness exist between us ? My sick fancy rushed to the Belthams for a denial. There did, of some sort, I knew ; and the thought partitioned my dreamy ideas, of which the noblest, taking advantage of my physical weakness, compelled me to confess that it was a vain delusion for one such as I to hope for Ottilia. This looking at the roots of yourself, if you are possessed of a nobler half that will do it, is a sound corrective of an excessive ambition. Unfortunately it would seem that young men can do it only in sickness. With the use of my legs, and open-air breathing, I became compact, and as hungry and zealous on behalf of my individuality, as proud of it as I had ever been : prouder and hungrier.

My first day of outing, when, looking at every face, I could reflect on the miraculous issue of mine almost clear from its pummelling, and above all, that my nose was safe —not stamped with the pugilist's brand—inspired a lyrical ebullition of gratitude. Who so intoxicated as the convalescent catching at health ?

I met Charles Etherell on the pier, and heard that my Parliamentary seat was considered in peril, together with a deal of gossip about my disappearance.

My father, who was growing markedly restless, on the watch for letters and new arrivals, started to pay Chippenden a flying visit. He begged me urgently to remain for another few days, while he gathered information, saying my presence at his chief quarters did him infinite service, and I always thought that possible. I should find he was a magician, he repeated, with a sort of hesitating fervour.

I had just waved my hand to him as the boat was bearing him away from the pier-head, when a feminine voice murmured in my ear, 'Is not this our third meeting, Mr. Harry Richmond ?—Venice, Elbestadt, and the

Isle of Wight ? ' She ran on, allowing me time to recognize Clara Goodwin. ' What was your last adventure ? You have been ill. *Very* ill ? Has it been serious ? '

I made light of it. ' No : a tumble.'

' You look pale,' she said quickly.

' That 's from grieving at the loss of my beauty, Miss Goodwin.'

' Have you really not been seriously ill ? ' she asked with an astonishing eagerness.

I told her mock-loftily that I did not believe in serious illnesses coming to godlike youth, and plied her in turn with inquiries.

' You have not been laid up in bed ? ' she persisted.

' No, on my honour, not in bed.'

' Then,' said she, ' I would give much to be able to stop that boat.'

She amazed me. ' Why ? '

' Because it 's going on a bad errand,' she replied.

' Miss Goodwin, you perplex me. My father has started in that boat.'

' Yes, I saw him.' She glanced hastily at the foam in a way to show indifference. ' What I am saying concerns others . . . who have heard you were dangerously ill. I have sent for them to hasten across.'

' My aunt and Miss Ilchester ? '

' No.'

' Who are they ? Miss Goodwin, I 'll answer any question. I 've been queerish, that 's true. Now let me hear who they are, when you arrived, when you expect them. Where are they now ? '

' As to me,' she responded with what stretched on my ears like an insufferable drawl, ' I came over last night to hire a furnished house or lodgings. Papa has an appointment attached to the fortifications yonder. We 'll leave the pier, if you please. You draw too much attention on

ladies who venture to claim acquaintance with so important a gentleman.'

We walked the whole length of the pier, chatting of our former meetings.

'Not here,' she said, as soon as I began to question.

I was led farther on, half expecting that the accessories of time and place would have to do with the revelation.

The bitter creature drew me at her heels into a linen-draper's shop. There she took a seat, pitched her voice to the key of a lady's at a dinner-table, when speaking to her cavalier of the history or attire of some one present, and said, 'You are sure the illness was not at all feigned?'

She had me as completely at her mercy in this detestable shop as if I had been in a witness-box.

'Feigned!' I exclaimed.

'That is no answer. And pray remember where you are.'

'No, the illness was not feigned.'

'And you have not made the most of it?'

'What an extraordinary thing to say!'

'That is no answer. And please do not imagine yourself under the necessity of acting every sentiment of your heart before these people.'

She favoured a shopman with half-a-dozen directions.

'My answer is, then, that I have *not* made the most of it,' I said.

'Not even by proxy?'

'Once more I 'm adrift.'

'You are certainly energetic. I must address you as a brother, or it will be supposed we are quarrelling. Harry, do you like that pattern?'

'Yes. What 's the meaning of proxy?'

'With the accent you give it, heaven only knows what it means. I would rather you did not talk here like a Frenchman relating his last love-affair in company.

Must your voice escape control exactly at the indicatory words ? Do you think your father made the most of it ? '

' Of my illness ? Oh ! yes ; the utmost. I should undoubtedly think so. That 's his way.'

' Why did you permit it ? '

' I was what they call " wandering " half the time. Besides, who could keep him in check ? I rarely know what he is doing.'

' You don't know what he wrote ? '

' Wrote ? '

' That you were dying.'

' Of me ? To whom ? '

She scrutinized me, and rose from her chair. ' I must try some other shop. How is it, that if these English people cannot make a " berthe " fit to wear, they do not conceive the idea of importing such things from Paris ? I will take your arm, Harry.'

' You have bought nothing,' I remarked.

' I have as much as I went for,' she replied, and gravely thanked the assistant leaning on his thumbs across the counter ; after which, dropping the graceless play of an enigma, she inquired whether I had forgotten the Frau von Dittmarsch.

I had, utterly ; but not her maiden name of Sibley.

' Miss Goodwin, is she one of those who are coming to the island ? '

' Frau von Dittmarsch ? Yes. She takes an interest in you. She and I have been in correspondence ever since my visit to Sarkeld. It reminds me, you may vary my maiden name with the Christian, if you like. Harry, I believe you are truthful as ever, in spite——'

' Don't be unjust,' said I.

' I wish I could think I was ! ' she rejoined. ' Frau von Dittmarsch was at Sarkeld, and received terrible

news of you. She called on me, at my father's residence over the water yonder, yesterday afternoon, desiring greatly to know—she is as cautious as one with a jewel in her custody—how it fared with you, whether you were actually in a dying state. I came here to learn ; I have friends here : you were not alone, or I should have called on you. The rumour was that you were very ill ; so I hired a furnished place for Frau von Dittmarsch at once. But when I saw you and him together, and the parting between you, I began to have fears ; I should have countermanded the despatch I sent by the boat, had it been possible.'

'It has gone ! And tell me the name of the other.'

'Frau von Dittmarsch has a husband.'

'Not with her now. Oh ! cruel ! speak : her name ? '

'Her name, Harry ? Her title is Countess von Delzenburg.'

'Not princess ? '

'Not in England.'

Then Ottilia was here !

My father was indeed a magician !

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE PRINCESS ENTRAPPED

'Not princess in England,' could betoken but one thing —an incredible act of devotion, so great that it stunned my senses, and I thought of it, and of all it involved, before the vision of Ottilia crossing seas took possession of me.

'The Princess Ottilia, Miss Goodwin ? '

'The Countess of Delzenburg, Harry.'

'To see me? She has come!'

'Harry, you talk like the boy you were when we met before you knew her. Yes and yes to everything you have to say, but I think you should spare her name.'

'She comes thinking me ill?'

'Dying.'

'I 'm as strong as ever I was.'

'I should imagine you are, only rather pale.'

'Have you, tell me, Clara, seen her yourself? Is she well?'

'Pale: not unwell: anxious.'

'About me?'

'It may be about the political affairs of the Continent; they are disturbed.'

'She spoke of me?'

'Yes.'

'She is coming by the next boat?'

'It 's my fear that she is.'

'Why do you fear?'

'Shall I answer you, Harry? It is useless now. Well, because she has been deceived. That is why. You will soon find it out.'

'Prince Ernest is at Sarkeld?'

'In Paris, I hear.'

'How will your despatch reach these ladies in time for them to come over by the next boat?'

'I have sent my father's servant. The General—he is promoted at last, Harry—attends the ladies in person, and is now waiting for the boat's arrival over there, to follow my directions.'

'You won't leave me?'

Miss Goodwin had promised to meet the foreign ladies on the pier. We quarrelled and made it up a dozen times like girl and boy, I calling her aunt Clara, as in the old days, and she calling me occasionally son Richie: an

imitation of my father's manner of speech to me when we formed acquaintance first in Venice. But I was very little aware of what I was saying or doing. The forces of my life were yoked to the heart, and tumbled as confusedly as the world under Phaëthon charioteer. We walked on the heights above the town. I looked over the water to the white line of shore and batteries where this wonder stood, who was what poets dream of, deep-hearted men hope for, none quite believe in. Hardly could I; and though my relenting spinster friend at my elbow kept assuring me it was true that she was there, my sceptical sight fixed on the stale prominences visible in the same features which they had worn day after empty day of late. This deed of hers was an act of devotion great as death. I knew it from experience consonant to Ottilia's character; but could a princess, hereditary, and bound in the league of governing princes, dare so to brave her condition? Complex of mind, simplest in character, the uncontrollable nobility of her spirit was no sooner recognized by me than I was shocked throughout by a sudden light, contrasting me appallingly with this supreme of women, who swept the earth aside for truth. I had never before received a distinct intimation of my littleness of nature, and my first impulse was to fly from thought, and then, as if to prove myself justly accused, I caught myself regretting—no, not regretting, gazing, as it were, on a picture of regrets—that Ottilia was not a romantic little lady of semi-celestial rank, exquisitely rash, wilful, desperately enamoured, bearing as many flying hues and peeps of fancy as a love-ballad, and not more roughly brushing the root-emotions.

If she had but been such an one, what sprightly colours, delicious sadness, magical transformations, tenderest intermixture of earth and heaven; what tears and sun-

beams, divinest pathos : what descents from radiance to consolatory twilight, would have surrounded me for poetry and pride to dwell on ! What captivating melody in the minor key would have been mine, though I lost her—the legacy of it all for ever ! Say a petulant princess, a star of beauty, mad for me, and the whisper of our passion and sorrows traversing the flushed world ! Was she coming ? Not she, but a touchstone, a relentless mirror, a piercing eye, a mind severe as the Goddess of the God's head : a princess indeed, but essentially a princess above women : a remorseless intellect, an actual soul visible in the flesh. She was truth. Was I true ? Not so very false, yet how far from truth ! The stains on me (a modern man writing his history is fugitive and crepuscular in alluding to them, as a woman kneeling at the ear-guichet) burnt like the blood-spots on the criminal compelled to touch his victim by savage ordinance, which knew the savage and how to search him. And these were faults of weakness rather than the sins of strength. I might as fairly hope for absolution of them from Ottilia as from offended laws of my natural being, gentle though she was, and charitable.

Was I not guilty of letting her come on to me hoodwinked at this moment ? I had a faint memory of Miss Goodwin's saying that she had been deceived, and I suggested a plan of holding aloof until she had warned the princess of my perfect recovery, to leave it at her option to see me.

'Yes,' Miss Goodwin assented : 'if you like, Harry.'

Her compassion for me only tentatively encouraged the idea. 'It would, perhaps, be right. You are the judge. If you can do it. You are acting bravely.' She must have laughed at me in her heart.

The hours wore on. My curse of introspection left me, and descending through the town to the pier, amid the

breezy blue skirts and bonnet-strings, we watched the packet-boat approaching. There was in advance one of the famous swift island wherries. Something went wrong with it, for it was overtaken, and the steamer came in first. I jumped on board, much bawled at. Out of a crowd of unknown visages, Janet appeared : my aunt Dorothy was near her. The pair began chattering of my paleness, and wickedness in keeping my illness unknown to them. They had seen Temple on an excursion to London ; he had betrayed me, as he would have betrayed an archangel to Janet.

'Will you not look at us, Harry ?' they both said.

The passengers were quitting the boat, strangers every one.

'Harry, have we really offended you in coming ?' said Janet.

My aunt Dorothy took the blame on herself.

I scarcely noticed them, beyond leading them on to the pier-steps and leaving them under charge of Miss Goodwin, who had, in matters of luggage and porterage, the practical mind and aplomb of an Englishwoman that has passed much of her time on the Continent. I fancied myself vilely duped by this lady. The boat was empty of its passengers ; a grumbling pier-man, wounded in his dignity, notified to me that there were fines for disregard of the Company's rules and regulations. His tone altered ; he touched his hat : 'Didn't know who you was, my lord.' Janet overheard him, and her face was humorous.

'*We* may break the rules, you see,' I said to her.

'We saw him landing on the other side of the water,' she replied ; so spontaneously did the circumstance turn her thoughts on my father.

'Did you speak to him ?'

'No.'

'You avoided him?'

'Aunty and I thought it best. He landed . . . there was a crowd.'

Miss Goodwin interposed: 'You go to Harry's hotel?'

'Grandada is coming down to-morrow or next day,' Janet prompted my aunt Dorothy.

'If we could seek for a furnished house; Uberly would watch the luggage,' Dorothy murmured in distress.

'Furnished houses, even rooms at hotels, are doubtful in the height of the season,' Miss Goodwin remarked. 'Last night I engaged the only decent set of rooms I could get, for friends of Harry's who are coming.'

'No wonder he was disappointed at seeing us—he was expecting them!' said Janet, smiling a little.

'They are sure to come,' said Miss Goodwin.

Near us a couple of yachtsmen were conversing.

'Oh, he 'll be back in a day or two,' one said. 'When you 've once tasted that old boy, you can't do without him. I remember when I was a youngster—it was in Lady Betty Bolton's day; she married old Edbury, you know, first wife—the Magnificent was then in his prime. He spent his money in a week: so he hired an eighty-ton schooner; he laid violent hands on a Jew, bagged him, lugged him on board, and sailed away.'

'What the deuce did he want with a Jew?' cried the other.

'Oh, the Jew supplied cheques for a three months' cruise in the Mediterranean, and came home, I heard, very good friends with his pirate. That 's only one of dozens.'

The unconscious slaughterers laughed.

'On another occasion'—I heard it said by the first speaker, as they swung round to parade the pier, and passed on narrating.

'Not an hotel, if it is possible to avoid it,' my aunt

Dorothy, with heightened colour, urged Miss Goodwin. They talked together.

'Grandada is coming to you, Harry,' Janet said. 'He has business in London, or he would have been here now. Our horses and carriages follow us : everything you would like. He does love you ! he is very anxious. I 'm afraid his health is worse than he thinks. Temple did not say your father was here, but grandada must have suspected it when he consented to our coming, and said he would follow us. So that looks well perhaps. He has been much quieter since your money was paid back to you. If they should meet . . . no, I hope they will not : grandada hates noise. And, Harry, let me tell you : it may be nothing : if he questions you, do not take fire ; just answer plainly : I 'm sure you understand. One in a temper at a time I 'm sure 's enough : you have only to be patient with him. He has been going to London, to the City, seeing lawyers, bankers, brokers, and coming back muttering. Ah ! dear old man. And when he ought to have peace ! Harry, the poor will regret him in a thousand places. I write a great deal for him now, and I know how they will. What are you looking at ? '

I was looking at a man of huge stature, of the stiffest build, whose shoulders showed me their full breadth while he stood displaying frontwards the open of his hand in a salute.

'Schwartz ! ' I called. Janet started, imagining some fierce interjection. The giant did not stir.

But others had heard. A lady stepped forward. 'Dear Mr. Harry Richmond ! Then you are better ? We had most alarming news of you.'

I bowed to the Frau von Dittmarsch, anciently Miss Sibley.

'The princess ? '

'She is here.'

Frau von Dittmarsch clasped Miss Goodwin's hand. I was touching Ottilia's. A veil partly swathed her face. She trembled : the breeze robbed me of her voice.

Our walk down the pier was almost in silence. Miss Goodwin assumed the guardianship of the foreign ladies. I had to break from them and provide for my aunt Dorothy and Janet.

'They went over in a little boat, they were so impatient. Who is she ?' Dorothy Beltham asked.

'The Princess Ottilia,' said Janet.

'Are you certain ? Is it really, Harry ?'

I confirmed it, and my aunt said, 'I should have guessed it could be no other ; she has a foreign grace.'

'General Goodwin was with them when the boat came in from the island,' said Janet. 'He walked up to Harry's father, and you noticed, aunty, that the ladies stood away, as if they wished to be unobserved, as we did, and pulled down their veils. They would not wait for our boat. We passed them crossing. People joked about the big servant over-weighting the wherry.'

Dorothy Beltham thought the water too rough for little boats.

'She knows what a sea is,' I said.

Janet gazed steadily after the retreating figures, and then commended me to the search for rooms. The end of it was that I abandoned my father's suite to them. An accommodating linen-draper possessed of a sea-view, and rooms which hurled the tenant to the windows in desire for it, gave me harbourage.

Till dusk I scoured the town to find Miss Goodwin, without whom there was no clue to the habitation I was seeking, and I must have passed her blindly again and again. My aunt Dorothy and Janet thanked me for my consideration in sitting down to dine with them ; they excused my haste to retire. I heard no reproaches

except on account of my not sending them word of my illness. Janet was not warm. She changed in colour and voice when I related what I had heard from Miss Goodwin, namely, that 'some one' had informed the princess I was in a dying state. I was obliged to offer up my father as a shield for Ottilia, lest false ideas should tarnish the image of her in their minds. Janet did not speak of him. The thought stood in her eyes; and there lies the evil of a sore subject among persons of one household: they have not to speak to exhibit their minds.

After a night of suspense I fell upon old Schwartz and Aennchen out in the earliest dawn, according to their German habits, to have a gaze at sea, and strange country and people. Aennchen was all wonder at the solitary place, Schwartz at the big ships. But when they tried to direct me to the habitation of their mistress, it was discovered by them that they had lost their bearings. Aennchen told me the margravine had been summoned to Rippau just before they left Sarkeld. Her mistress had informed Baroness Turckems of her intention to visit England. Prince Ernest was travelling in France.

The hour which brought me to Ottilia was noon. The arrangements of the ladies could only grant me thirty minutes, for Janet was to drive the princess out into the country to view the island. She and my aunt Dorothy had been already introduced. Miss Goodwin, after presenting them, insisted upon ceremoniously accompanying me to the house. Quite taking the vulgar view of a proceeding such as the princess had been guilty of, and perhaps fearing summary audacity and interestedness in the son of a father like mine, she ventured on lecturing me, as though it lay with me to restrain the fair romantic head, forbear from calling up my special advantages, advise, and stand to the wisdom of this world, and be the

man of honour. The princess had said: 'Not see him when I have come to him?' I reassured my undiscerning friend partly, not wholly.

'Would it be commonly sensible or civil, to refuse to see me, having come?'

Miss Goodwin doubted.

I could indicate forcibly, because I felt, the clear-judging brain and tempered self-command whereby Ottilia had gained her decision.

Miss Goodwin nodded and gave me the still-born affirmative of politeness. Her English mind expressed itself willing to have exonerated the rash great lady for visiting a dying lover, but he was not the same person now that he was on his feet, consequently her expedition wore a different aspect:—my not dying condemned her. She entreated me to keep the fact of the princess's arrival unknown to my father, on which point we were one. Intensely enthusiastic for the men of her race, she would have me, above all things, by a form of adjuration designed to be a masterpiece of persuasive rhetoric, 'prove myself an Englishman.' I was to show that 'the honour, interests, reputation and position of any lady (demented or not,' she added) 'were as precious to me as to the owner': that 'no woman was ever in peril of a shadow of loss in the hands of an English gentleman,' and so forth, rather surprisingly to me, remembering her off-hand manner of the foregoing day. But the sense of responsibility thrown upon her ideas of our superior national dignity had awakened her fervider naturalness —made her a different person, as we say when accounting, in our fashion, for what a little added heat may do.

The half hour allotted to me fled. I went from the room and the house, feeling that I had seen and heard her who was barely of the world of humankind for me, so strongly did imagination fly with her. I kissed her

fingers, I gazed in her eyes, I heard the beloved voice. All passed too swift for happiness. Recollections set me throbbing, but recollection brought longing. She said, 'Now I have come I must see you, Harry.' Did it signify that to see me was a piece of kindness at war with her judgement? She rejoiced at my perfect recovery, though it robbed her of the plea in extenuation of this step she had taken. She praised me for abstaining to write to her, when I was stammering a set of hastily-impressed reasons to excuse myself for the omission. She praised my step into Parliament. It did not seem to involve a nearer approach to her. She said, 'You have not wasted your time in England.' It was for my solitary interests that she cared, then.

I brooded desperately. I could conceive an overlooking height that made her utterance simple and consecutive: I could not reach it. Topics which to me were palpitating, had no terror for her. She said, 'I have offended my father; I have written to him; he will take me away.' In speaking of the letter which had caused her to offend, she did not blame the writer. I was suffered to run my eyes over it, and was ashamed. It read to me too palpably as an outcry to delude and draw her hither:—pathos and pathos: the father holding his dying son in his arms, his sole son, Harry Richmond; the son set upon by enemies in the night: the lover never daring to beg for a sight of his beloved ere he passed away:—not an ill-worded letter; read uncritically, it may have been touching: it must have been, though it was the reverse for me. I frowned, broke down in regrets, under sharp humiliation.

She said, 'You knew nothing of it. A little transgression is the real offender. When we are once out of the way traced for us, we are in danger of offending at every step; we are as lawless as the outcasts.' That

meant, 'My turning aside to you originally was the blameable thing.' It might mean, 'My love of you sets my ideas of duty at variance with my father's.'

She smiled; nothing was uttered in a tone of despondency. Her high courage and breeding gave her even in this pitfall the smoothness which most women keep for society. Why she had not sent me any message or tidings of herself to Riversley was not a matter that she could imagine to perplex me: she could not imagine my losing faith in her. The least we could do, I construed it, the religious bond between us was a faith in one another that should sanctify to our souls the external injuries it caused us to commit. But she talked in no such strain. Her delight in treading English ground was her happy theme. She said, 'It is as young as when we met in the forest'; namely, the feeling revived for England. How far off we were from the green Devonshire coast, was one of her questions, suggestive of our old yacht-voyage lying among her dreams. Excepting an extreme and terrorizing paleness, there was little to fever me with the thought that she suffered mortally. Of reproach, not a word; nor of regret. At the first touch of hands, when we stood together, alone, she said, 'Would hearing of your recovery have given me peace?' My privileges were the touch of hands, the touch of her fingers to my lips, a painless hearing and seeing, and passionate recollection. She said, 'Impatience is not for us, Harry':— I was not to see her again before the evening. These were the last words she said, and seemed the lightest until my hot brain made a harvest of them transcending thrice-told vows of love. Did they not mean, 'We two wait': therefore, 'The years are bondmen to our stedfastness.' Could sweeter have been said? They might mean nothing!

She was veiled when Janet drove her out; Janet sitting

upright in her masterly way, smoothing her pet ponies with the curl of her whip, chatting and smiling; the princess slightly leaning back. I strode up to the country roads, proud of our land's beauty under a complacent sky. By happy chance, which in a generous mood I ascribed to Janet's good nature, I came across them at a seven miles' distance. They were talking spiritedly: what was wonderful, they gave not much heed to me: they seemed on edge for one another's conversation: each face was turned to the other's, and after nodding an adieu, they resumed the animated discourse. I had been rather in alarm lest Ottilia should think little of Janet. They passed out of sight without recurring to a thought of me behind them.

In the evening I was one among a group of ladies. I had the opportunity of hearing the running interchange between Ottilia and Janet, which appeared to be upon equal terms; indeed, Janet led. The subjects were not very deep. Plain wits, candour, and an unpretending tongue, it seemed, could make common subjects attractive, as fair weather does our English woods and fields. The princess was attracted by something in Janet. I myself felt the sway of something, while observing Ottilia's rapt pleasure in her talk and her laughter, with those funny familiar frowns and current dimples twisting and melting away like a play of shadows on the eddies of the brook.

'I 'm glad to be with her,' Janet said of Ottilia.

It was just in that manner she spoke in Ottilia's presence. Why it should sound elsewhere unsatisfactorily blunt, and there possess a finished charm, I could not understand.

I mentioned to Janet that I feared my father would be returning.

She contained herself with a bridled 'Oh!'

We were of one mind as to the necessity for keeping him absent, if possible.

'Harry, you 'll pardon me; I can't talk of him,' said she.

I proposed half-earnestly to foil his return by going to London at once.

'That 's manly; that 's nice of you,' Janet said.

This was on our walk from the house at night. My aunt Dorothy listened, pressing my arm. The next morning Janet urged me to go at once. 'Keep him away, bring down grandada, Harry. She cannot quit the island, because she has given Prince Ernest immediate rendezvous here. You must not delay to go. Yes, the Countess of Delzenburg shall have your excuses. And no, I promise you I will run nobody down. Besides, if I do, aunty will be at hand to plead for the defence, and she can! She has a way that binds one to accept everything she says, and Temple ought to study with her for a year or two before he wears his gown. Bring him back with you and grandada. He is esteemed here at his true worth. I love him for making her in love with English boys. I leave the men for those who know them, but English boys are unrivalled, I declare. Honesty, bravery, modesty, and nice looks! They are so nice in their style and their way of talking. I tell her, our men may be shy and sneering,—awkward, I daresay; but our boys beat the world. Do bring down Temple. I should so like her to see a cricket-match between two good elevens of our boys, Harry, while she is in England! We could have arranged for one at Riversley.'

I went, and I repressed the idea, on my way, that Janet had manœuvred by sending me off to get rid of me, but I felt myself a living testimony to her heartlessness: for no girl of any heart, acting the part of friend, would have allowed me to go without a leave-taking of her I loved:

few would have been so cruel as to declare it a duty to go at all, especially when the chances were that I might return to find the princess wafted away. Ottilia's condescension had done her no good. 'Turn to the right, that 's your path; on.' She seemed to speak in this style, much as she made her touch of the reins understood by her ponies. 'I 'll take every care of the princess,' she said. Her conceit was unbounded. I revelled in contemptuous laughter at her assumption of the post of leader with Ottilia. However, it was as well that I should go: there was no trusting my father.

CHAPTER XLIX

WHICH FORESHADOWS A GENERAL GATHERING

At our Riversley station I observed the squire, in company with Captain Bulsted, jump into a neighbouring carriage. I joined them, and was called upon to answer various inquiries. The squire gave me one of his short tight grasps of the hand, in which there was warmth and shyness, our English mixture. The captain whispered in my ear: 'He oughtn't to be alone.'

'How 's the great-grandmother of the tribe?' said I.

Captain Bulsted nodded, as if he understood, but was at sea until I mentioned the bottle of rum and the remarkable length of that old lady's measurement.

'Ay, to be sure! a grand old soul,' he said. 'You know that scum of old, Harry.'

I laughed, and so did he, at which I laughed the louder.

'He laughs, I suppose, because his party 's got a majority in the House,' said the squire.

'We gave you a handsome surplus this year, sir.'

'Sweated out of the country's skin and bone, ay!'

'You were complimented by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.'

'Yes, that fellow's compliments are like a cabman's, and cry fool:—he never thanks you but when he 's overpaid.'

Captain Bulsted applauded the sarcasm.

'Why did you keep out of knowledge all this time, Hal?' my grandfather asked.

I referred him to the captain.

'Hang it,' cried Captain Bulsted, 'do you think I 'd have been doing duty for you if I 'd known where to lay hold of you?'

'Well, if you didn't shake hands with me, you touched my toes,' said I, and thanked him with all my heart for his kindness to an old woman on the point of the grave. I had some fun to flavour melancholy with.

My grandfather resumed his complaint: 'You might have gone clean off, and we none the wiser.'

'Are we quite sure that his head 's clean on?' said the mystified captain.

'Of course we should run to him, wherever he was, if he was down on his back,' the squire muttered.

'Ay, ay, sir; of course,' quoth Captain William, frowning to me to reciprocate this relenting mood. 'But, Harry, where did you turn off that night? We sat up expecting you. My poor Julia was in a terrible fright, my lad. Eh? speak up.'

I raised the little finger.

'Oh, oh,' went he, happily reassured; but, reflecting, added: 'A bout of it?'

I dropped him a penitent nod.

'That 's bad, though,' said he.

'Then why did you tip me a bottle of rum, Captain William?'

'By George, Harry, you 've had a crack o' the sconce,' he exclaimed, more sagaciously than he was aware of.

My grandfather wanted to keep me by his side in London until we two should start for the island next day; but his business was in the city, mine toward the West. We appointed to meet two hours after reaching the terminus.

He turned to me while giving directions to his man.

'You 've got *him* down there, I suppose?'

'My father 's in town, sir. He shall keep away,' I said.

'Humph! I mayn't object to see him.'

This set me thinking.

Captain Bulsted—previously asking me in a very earnest manner whether I was really all right and sound—favoured me with a hint:

'The squire has plunged into speculations of his own, or else he is peeping at somebody else's. No danger of the dad being mixed up with Companies? Let 's hope not. Julia pledged her word to Janet that I would look after the old squire. I suppose I can go home this evening? My girl hates to be alone.'

'By all means,' said I; and the captain proposed to leave the squire at his hotel, in the event of my failing to join him in the city.

'But don't fail, if you can help it,' he urged me; 'for things somehow, my dear Harry, appear to me to look like the compass when the needle gives signs of atmospheric disturbance. My only reason for saying so is common observation. You can judge for yourself that he is glad to have you with him.'

I told the captain I was equally glad; for, in fact, my grandfather's quietness and apparently friendly disposition tempted me to petition for a dower for the princess at once, so that I might be in the position to offer Prince

Ernest on his arrival a distinct alternative; supposing —it was still but a supposition—Ottilia should empower me. Incessant dialogues of perpetually shifting tendencies passed between Ottilia and me in my brain—now dark, now mildly fair, now very wild, on one side at least. Never, except by downright force of will, could I draw from the phantom of her one purely irrational outcry, so deeply-rooted was the knowledge of her nature and mind; and when I did force it, I was no gainer: a puppet stood in her place—the vision of Ottilia melted out in threads of vapour.

'And yet she has come to me; she has braved everything to come.' I might say that, to liken her to the women who break rules and read duties by their own light, but I could not cheat my knowledge of her. Mrs. Waddy met me in the hall of my father's house, as usual, pressing, I regretted to see, one hand to her side. 'Her heart,' she said, 'was easily set pitty-pat now.' She had been, by her master's orders, examined by two of the chief physicians of the kingdom, 'baronets both.' They advised total rest. As far as I could apprehend, their baronetcies and doings in high regions had been of more comfort than their prescriptions.

'What I am I must be,' she said, meekly; 'and I cannot quit his service till he 's abroad again, or I drop. He has promised me a monument. I don't want it; but it shows his kindness.'

A letter from Heriot informed me that the affair between Edbury and me was settled: he could not comprehend how.

'What is this new Jury of Honour? Who are the jurymen?' he asked, and affected wit.

I thanked him for a thrashing in a curt reply.

My father had left the house early in the morning. Mrs. Waddy believed that he meant to dine that evening

at the season's farewell dinner of the Trump-Trick Club : 'Leastways, Tollingby has orders to lay out his gentlemen's-dinners' evening-suit. Yesterday afternoon he flew down to Chippenden, and was home late. To-day he 's in the City, or one of the squares. Lady Edbury 's —ah !—detained in town with the jaundice or toothache. He said he was sending to France for a dentist—or was it Germany, for some lady's eyes ? I am sure I don't know. Well or ill, so long as you 're anything to him, he will abound. Pocket and purse ! You know him by this time, Mr. Harry. Oh, my heart ! '

A loud knock at the door had brought on the poor creature's palpitations.

This visitor was no other than Prince Ernest. The name on his card was Graf von Delzenburg, and it set my heart leaping to as swift a measure as Mrs. Waddy's.

Hearing that I was in the house, he desired to see me.

We met, with a formal bow.

'I congratulate you right heartily upon being out of the list of the nekrōn,' he said, civilly. 'I am on my way to one of your watering-places, whither my family should have preceded me. Do you publish the names and addresses of visitors daily, as it is the custom with us ? '

I relieved his apprehensions on that head : 'Here and there, rarely ; and only at the hotels, I believe.' The excuse was furnished for offering the princess's address.

'Possibly, in a year or two, we may have the pleasure of welcoming you at Sarkeld,' said the prince, extending his hand. 'Then, you have seen the Countess of Delzenburg ? '

'On the day of her arrival, your Highness. Ladies of my family are staying on the island.'

'Ah ? '

He paused, and invited me to bow to him. We bowed thus in the room, in the hall, and at the street-door.

For what purpose could he have called on my father? To hear the worst at once? That seemed likely, supposing him to have lost his peculiar confidence in the princess, of which the courtly paces he had put me through precluded me from judging.

But I guessed acutely that it was not his intention to permit of my meeting Ottilia a second time. The blow was hard: I felt it as if it had been struck already, and thought I had gained resignation, until, like a man reprieved on his road to execution, the narrowed circle of my heart opened out to the breadth of the world in a minute. Returning from the city, I hurried to my father's house, late in the afternoon, and heard that he had started to overtake the prince, leaving word that the prince was to be found at his address in the island. No doubt could exist regarding the course I was bound to take. I drove to my grandfather, stated my case to him, and by sheer vehemence took the wind out of his sails; so that when I said, 'I am the only one alive who can control my father,' he answered mildly, 'Seems t' other way,' and chose a small snort for the indulgence of his private opinion.

'What! this princess came over alone, and is down driving out with my girl under an alias?' he said, showing sour aversion at the prospect of a collision with the foreign species, as expressive as the ridge of a cat's back.

Temple came to dine with us, so I did not leave him quite to himself, and Temple promised to accompany him down to the island.

'Oh, go, if you like,' the fretted old man dismissed me: 'I 've got enough to think over. Hold him fast to stand up to me within forty-eight hours, present time; you know who I mean; I 've got a question or two for him. How he treats his foreign princes and princesses don't concern me. I 'd say, like the Prevention-Cruelty-

Animal's man to the keeper of the menagerie, "Lecture 'em, wound their dignity, hurt their feelings, only don't wop 'em." I don't wish any harm to them, but what the deuce they do here nosing after my grandson! . . . There, go; we shall be having it out and ha' done with to-morrow or next day. I 've run the badger to earth, else I 'm not fit to follow a scent.'

He grumbled at having to consume other than his Riversley bread, butter, beef, and ale for probably another fortnight. One of the boasts of Riversley was, that while the rest of the world ate and drank poison, the Grange lived on its own solid substance, defying malefactory Radical tricksters.

Temple was left to hear the rest. He had the sweetest of modest wishes for a re-introduction to Ottilia.

CHAPTER L

WE ARE ALL IN MY FATHER'S NET

Journeying down by the mail-train in the face of a great sunken sunset broken with cloud, I chanced to ask myself what it was that I seriously desired to have. My purpose to curb my father was sincere and good; but concerning my heart's desires, whitherward did they point? I thought of Janet—she made me gasp for air; of Ottilia, and she made me long for earth. Sharp, as I write it, the distinction smote me. I might have been divided by an electrical shot into two halves, with such an equal force was I drawn this way and that, pointing nowhither. To strangle the thought of either one of them was like the pang of death; yet it did not strike me that I loved the two: they were apart in my mind,

actually as if I had been divided. I passed the Riversley station under sombre sunset fires, saddened by the fancy that my old home and vivacious Janet were ashes, past hope. I came on the smell of salt air, and had that other spirit of woman around me, of whom the controlled sea-deeps were an image, who spoke to my soul like starlight. Much wise counsel, and impatience of the wisdom, went on within me. I walked like a man with a yawning wound, and had to whip the sense of passion for a drug. Toward which one it strove I know not ; it was blind and stormy as the night.

Not a boatman would take me across. The lights of the island lay like a crown on the water. I paced the ramparts, eyeing them, breathing the keen salt of thundering waves, until they were robbed of their magic by the coloured East.

It is, I have learnt, out of the conflict of sensations such as I then underwent that a young man's brain and morality, supposing him not to lean overmuch to sickly sentiment, becomes gradually enriched and strengthened, and himself shaped for capable manhood. I was partly conscious of a better condition in the morning ; and a sober morning it was to me after my long sentinel's step to and fro. I found myself possessed of one key—whether the right one or not—wherewith to read the princess, which was never possible to me when I was under stress of passion, or of hope or despair ; my perplexities over what she said, how she looked, ceased to trouble me. I read her by this strange light : that she was a woman who could only love intelligently—love, that is, in the sense of giving herself. She had the power of passion, and it could be stirred ; but he who kindled it wrecked his chance if he could not stand clear in her intellect's unsparing gaze. Twice already she must have felt herself disillusioned by me. This third time,

possibly, she blamed her own fatally credulous tenderness, not me ; but it was her third awakening, and could affection and warmth of heart combat it ? Her child's enthusiasm for my country had prepared her for the impression which the waxen mind of the dreamy invalid received deeply ; and so, aided by the emotional blood of youth, she gave me place in her imagination, probing me still curiously, as I remembered, at a season when her sedate mind was attaining to joint deliberations with the impulsive overgenerous heart.

Then ensued for her the successive shocks of discernment. She knew me to have some of the vices, many follies, all the intemperateness of men who carve a way for themselves in the common roads, if barely they do that. And resembling common men (men, in a judgement elective as hers, common, however able), I was not assuredly to be separated by her from my associations ; from the thought of my father, for example. Her look at him in the lake-palace library, and her manner in unfolding and folding his recent letter to her, and in one or two necessitated allusions, embraced a kind of grave, pitiful humour, beyond smiles or any outward expression, as if the acknowledgement that it was so quite obliterated the wonder that it should be so—that one such as he could exercise influence upon her destiny. Or she may have made her reckoning generally, not personally, upon our human destinies : it is the more likely, if, as I divine, the calm oval of her lifted eyelids contemplated him in the fulness of the recognition that this world, of which we hope unuttered things, can be shifted and swayed by an ignis-fatuus. The father of one now seen through, could hardly fail of being transfixed himself. It was horrible to think of. I would rather have added a vice to my faults than that she should have penetrated him.

Nearing the island, I was reminded of the early morning

when I landed on the Flemish flats. I did not expect a similar surprise, but before my rowers had pulled in, the tall beaconhead of old Schwartz notified that his mistress might be abroad. Janet walked with her. I ran up the steps to salute them, and had Ottilia's hand in mine.

'Prince Ernest has arrived?'

'My father came yesterday evening.'

'Do you leave to-day?'

'I cannot tell; he will decide.'

It seemed a good omen, until I scanned Janet's sombre face.

'You will not see us out for the rest of the day, Harry,' said she.

'That is your arrangement?'

'It is.'

'Your own?'

'Mine, if you like.'

There was something hard in her way of speaking, as though she blamed me, and the princess were under her protection against me. She vouchsafed no friendly significance of look and tone.

In spite of my readiness to criticize her (which in our language means condemn) for always assuming leadership with whomsoever she might be, I was impressed by the air of high-bred friendliness existing between her and the princess. Their interchange was pleasant to hear. Ottilia had caught the spirit of her frank manner of speech; and she, though in a less degree, the princess's fine ease and sweetness. They conversed, apparently, like equal minds. On material points, Janet unhesitatingly led. It was she who brought the walk to a close.

'Now, Harry, you had better go and have a little sleep. I should like to speak to you early.'

Ottilia immediately put her hand out to me.

I begged permission to see her to her door.

Janet replied for her, indicating old Schwartz : ' We have a protector, you see, six feet and a half.'

An hour later, Schwartz was following her to the steps of her hotel. She saw me, and waited. For a wonder, she displayed reluctance in disburdening herself of what she had to say. ' Harry, you know that he has come ? He and Prince Ernest came together. Get him to leave the island at once : he can return to-morrow. Grandada writes of wishing to see him. Get him away to-day.'

' Is the prince going to stay here ? ' I asked.

' No. I daresay I am only guessing ; I hope so. He has threatened the prince.'

' What with ? '

' Oh ! Harry, can't you understand ? I 'm no reader of etiquette, but even I can see that the story of a young princess travelling over to England alone to visit . . . and you . . ., and her father fetching her away ! The prince is almost at his mercy, unless you *make* the man behave like a gentleman. This is exactly the thing Miss Goodwin feared ! '

' But who 's to hear of the story ? ' said I.

Janet gave an impatient sigh.

' Do you mean that my father has threatened to publish it, Janet ? '

' I won't say he has. He has made the prince afraid to move : that I think is true.'

' Did the princess herself mention it to you ? '

' She understands her situation, I am sure.'

' Did she speak of " the man," as you call him ? '

' Yes : not as I do. You must try by-and-by to forgive me. Whether he set a trap or not, he has decoyed her—don't frown at words—and it remains for you to act as I don't doubt you will ; but lose no time. Determine. Oh ! if I were a man ! '

'You would muzzle us?'

'Muzzle, or anything you please; I would make any one related to me behave honourably. I would give him the alternative . . .'

'You foolish girl! suppose he took it?'

'I would make him feel my will. He should not take it. Keep to the circumstances, Harry. If you have no control over him—I should think I was not fit to live, in such a position! No control over him at a moment like this? and the princess in danger of having her reputation hurt! Surely, Harry! But why should I speak to you as if you were undecided!'

'Where is he?'

'At the house where you sleep. He surrendered his rooms here very kindly.'

'Aunty has seen him?'

Janet blushed: I thought I knew why. It was for subtler reasons than I should have credited her with conceiving.

'She sent for him, at my request, late last night. She believed her influence would be decisive. So do I. She could not even make the man perceive that he was acting —to use her poor dear old-fashioned word—reprehensibly in frightening the prince to further your interests. From what I gathered he went off in a song about them. She said he talked so well! And aunty Dorothy, too! I should nearly as soon have expected grandada to come in for his turn of the delusion. How I wish he was here! Uberly goes by the first boat to bring him down. I feel with Miss Goodwin that it will be a disgrace for all of us—the country's disgrace. As for our family! . . . Harry, and your name! Good-bye. Do your best.'

I was in the mood to ask, 'On behalf of the country?' She had, however, a glow and a ringing articulation in her excitement that forbade trifling; a minute's reflection

set me weighing my power of will against my father's. I nodded to her.

'Come to us when you are at liberty,' she called.

I have said that I weighed my power of will against my father's. Contemplation of the state of the scales did not send me striding to meet him. Let it be remembered —I had it strongly in memory—that he habitually deluded himself under the supposition that the turn of all events having an aspect of good fortune had been planned by him of old, and were offered to him as the legitimately-won fruits of a politic life. While others deemed him mad, or merely reckless, wild, a creature living for the day, he enjoyed the conceit of being a profound schemer, in which he was fortified by a really extraordinary adroitness to take advantage of occurrences: and because he was prompt in an emergency, and quick to profit of a crisis, he was deluded to imagine that he had created it. Such a man would be with difficulty brought to surrender his prize.

Again, there was his love for me. 'Pater est, Pamphile; —difficile est.' How was this vast conceit of a not unreal paternal love to be encountered? The sense of honour and of decency might appeal to him personally; would either of them get a hearing if he fancied them to be standing in opposition to my dearest interests? I, unhappily, as the case would be sure to present itself to him, appeared the living example of his eminently politic career. After establishing me the heir of one of the wealthiest of English commoners, would he be likely to forego any desperate chance of ennobling me by the brilliant marriage? His dreadful devotion to me extinguished the hope that he would, unless I should happen to be particularly masterful in dealing with him. I heard his nimble and overwhelming volubility like a flood advancing. That could be withstood, and his

arguments and persuasions. But by what steps could I restrain the man himself? I said 'the man,' as Janet did. He figured in my apprehensive imagination as an engine more than as an individual. Lassitude oppressed me. I felt that I required every access of strength possible, physical besides moral, in anticipation of our encounter, and took a swim in sea-water, which displaced my drowsy fit, and some alarming intimations of cowardice menacing a paralysis of the will: I had not altogether recovered from my gipsy drubbing. And now I wanted to have the contest over instantly. It seemed presumable that my father had slept at my lodgings. There, however, the report of him was, that he had inspected the rooms, highly complimented the owner of them, and vanished.

Returning to the pier, I learnt that he had set sail in his hired yacht for the sister town on the Solent, at an early hour:—for what purpose? I knew of it too late to intercept it. One of the squire's horses trotted me over; I came upon Colonel Hibbert Segrave near the Club-house, and heard that my father was off again: 'But your German prince and papa-in-law shall be free of the Club for the next fortnight,' said he, and cordially asked to have the date of the marriage. My face astonished him. He excused himself for speaking of this happy event so abruptly. A sting of downright anger drove me back at a rapid canter. It flashed on me that this Prince Ernest, whose suave fashion of depressing me, and philosophical skill in managing his daughter, had induced me to regard him as a pattern of astuteness, was really both credulous and feeble, or else supremely unsuspecting: and I was confirmed in the latter idea on hearing that he had sailed to visit the opposite harbour and docks on board my father's yacht. Janet shared my secret opinion.

'The prince is a gentleman,' she said.

Her wrath and disgust were unspeakable. My aunt Dorothy blamed her for overdue severity. 'The prince, I suppose, goes of his own free will where he pleases.'

Janet burst out, 'Oh! can't you see through it, aunty? The prince goes about without at all knowing that the person who takes him—Harry sees it—is making him compromise himself: and by-and-by the prince will discover that he has no will of his own, whatever he may wish to resolve upon doing.'

'Is he quite against Harry?' asked my aunt Dorothy.

'Dear aunty, he 's a prince, and a proud man. He will never in his lifetime consent to . . . to what you mean, without being hounded into it. I haven't the slightest idea whether anything will force him. I know that the princess would have too much pride to submit, even to save her name. But it 's her name that 's in danger. Think of the scandal to a sovereign princess! I know the signification of that now; I used to laugh at Harry's "sovereign princess." She is one, and thorough! there is no one like her. Don't you understand, aunty, that the intrigue, plot—I don't choose to be nice upon terms—may be perfectly successful, and do good to nobody. The prince may be tricked; the princess, I am sure, will not.'

Janet's affectation of an intimate and peculiar knowledge of the princess was a show of her character that I was accustomed to: still, it was evident they had conversed much, and perhaps intimately. I led her to tell me that the princess had expressed no views upon my father. 'He does not come within her scope, Harry.' 'Scope' was one of Janet's new words, wherewith she would now and then fall to seasoning a serviceable but savourless outworn vocabulary of the common table. In spite of that and other offences, rendered prominent to me by the lifting of her lip and her frown when she had

to speak of my father, I was on her side, not on his. Her estimation of the princess was soundly based. She discerned exactly the nature of Ottilia's entanglement, and her peril.

She and my aunt Dorothy passed the afternoon with Ottilia, while I crossed the head of the street, looking down at the one house, where the princess was virtually imprisoned, either by her father's express injunction or her own discretion. And it was as well that she should not be out. The yachting season had brought many London men to the island. I met several who had not forgotten the newspaper-paragraph assertions and contradictions. Lord Alton, Admiral Loftus, and others were on the pier and in the outfitters' shops, eager for gossip, as the languid stretch of indolence inclines men to be. The Admiral asked me for the whereabout of Prince Ernest's territory. He too said that the prince would be free of the Club during his residence, adding: 'Where is he?'—not a question demanding an answer. The men might have let the princess go by, but there would have been questions urgently demanding answers had she been seen by their women.

Late in the evening my father's yacht was sighted from the pier. Just as he reached his moorings, and his boat was hauled round, the last steamer came in. Sharp-eyed Janet saw the squire on board among a crowd, and Temple next to him, supporting his arm.

'Has grandada been ill?' she exclaimed.

My chief concern was to see my father's head rising in the midst of the crowd, uncovering repeatedly. Prince Ernest and General Goodwin were behind him, stepping off the lower pier-platform. The General did not look pleased. My grandfather, with Janet holding his arm, in the place of Temple, stood waiting to see that his man had done his duty by the luggage.

My father, advancing, perceived me, and almost taking the squire into his affectionate salutation, said: 'Nothing could be more opportune than your arrival, Mr. Beltham.'

The squire rejoined: 'I wanted to see you, Mr. Richmond, and not in public.'

'I grant the private interview, sir, at your convenience.'

Janet went up to General Goodwin. My father talked to me, and lost a moment in shaking Temple's hand and saying kind things.

'Name any hour you please, Mr. Beltham,' he resumed; 'meantime, I shall be glad to effect the introduction between Harry's grandfather and his Highness Prince Ernest of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld.'

He turned. General Goodwin was hurrying the prince up the steps, the squire at the same time retreating hastily. I witnessed the spectacle of both parties to the projected introduction swinging round to make their escape. My father glanced to right and left. He covered in the airiest fashion what would have been confusion to another by carrying on a jocose remark that he had left half spoken to Temple, and involved Janet in it, and soon —through sheer amiable volubility and his taking manner —the squire himself for a minute or so.

'Harry, I have to tell you she is not unhappy,' Janet whispered rapidly. 'She is reading of one of our great men alive now. She is glad to be on our ground.' Janet named a famous admiral, kindling as a fiery beacon to our blood. She would have said more: she looked the remainder; but she could have said nothing better fitted to spur me to the work she wanted done. Mournfulness dropped on me like a cloud in thinking of the bright little princess of my boyhood, and the Ottilia of to-day, faithful to her early passion for our sea-heroes

and my country, though it had grievously entrapped her. And into what hands! Not into hands which could cast one ray of honour on a devoted head. The contrast between the sane service-giving men she admired, and the hopping skipping social meteor, weaver of webs, thrower of nets, who offered her his history for a nuptial acquisition, was ghastly, most discomforting. He seemed to have entangled us all.

He said that he had. He treated me now confessedly as a cipher. The prince, the princess, my grandfather, and me—he had gathered us together, he said. I heard from him that the prince, assisted by him in the part of an adviser, saw no way of cutting the knot but by a marriage. All were at hand for a settlement of the terms :—Providence and destiny were dragged in.

'Let 's have no theatrical talk,' I interposed.

'Certainly, Richie; the plainest English,' he assented.

This was on the pier, while he bowed and greeted passing figures. I dared not unlink my arm, for fear of further mischief. I got him to my rooms, and insisted on his dining there.

'Dry bread will do,' he said.

My anticipations of the nature of our wrestle were correct. But I had not expected him to venture on the assertion that the prince was for the marriage. He met me at every turn with this downright iteration. 'The prince consents: he knows his only chance is to yield. I have him fast.'

'How?' I inquired.

'How, Richie? Where is your perspicuity? I have him here. I loosen a thousand tongues on him. I——'

'No, not on him; on the princess, you mean.'

'On him. The princess is the willing party; she and you are one. On him, I say. 'Tis but a threat: I hold it in terrorem. And by heaven, son Richie, it assures

me I have not lived and fought for nothing. "Now is the day and now is the hour." On your first birthday, my boy, I swore to marry you to one of the highest ladies upon earth : she was, as it turns out, then unborn. No matter : I keep my oath. Abandon it ? pooh ! you are —forgive me—silly. Pardon me for remarking it, you have not that dashing courage—never mind. The point is, I have my prince in his trap. We are perfectly polite, but I have him, and he acknowledges it ; he shrugs : love has beaten him. Very well. And observe : I permit no squire-of-low-degree insinuations ; none of that. The lady—all earthly blessings on her !—does not stoop to Harry Richmond. I have the announcement in the newspapers. I maintain it the fruit of a life of long and earnest endeavour, legitimately won, by heaven it is ! and with the constituted authorities of my native land against me. Your grandad proposes formally for the princess to-morrow morning.'

He maddened me. Merely to keep him silent I burst out in a flux of reproaches as torrent-like as his own could be ; and all the time I was wondering whether it was true that a man who talked as he did, in his strain of florid flimsy, had actually done a practical thing.

The effect of my vehemence was to brace him and make him sedately emphatic. He declared himself to have gained entire possession of the prince's mind. He repeated his positive intention to employ his power for my benefit. Never did power of earth or of hell seem darker to me than he at that moment, when solemnly declaiming that he was prepared to forfeit my respect and love, die sooner than 'yield his prince.' He wore a new aspect, spoke briefly and pointedly, using the phrases of a determined man, and in voice and gesture signified that he had us all in a grasp of iron. The charge of his having plotted to bring it about he accepted with exultation.

'I admit,' he said, 'I did not arrange to have Germany present for a witness besides England, but since he is here, I take advantage of the fact, and to-morrow you will see young Eckart down.'

I cried out, as much enraged at my feebleness to resist him, as in disgust of his unscrupulous tricks.

'Ay, you have not known me, Richie,' said he. 'I pilot you into harbour, and all you can do is just the creaking of the vessel to me. You are in my hands. I pilot you. I have you the husband of the princess within the month. No other course is open to her. And I have the assurance that she loses nothing by it. She is yours, my son.'

'She will not be. You have wrecked my last chance. You cover me with dishonour.'

'You are a youngster, Richie. 'Tis the wish of her heart. Probably while you and I are talking it over, the prince is confessing that he has no escape. He has not a loophole! She came to you; you take her. I am far from withholding my admiration of her behaviour; but there it is—she came. Not consent? She is a ruined woman if she refuses!

'Through you, through you!—through my father!'

'Have you both gone mad?'

'Try to see this,' I implored him. 'She will not be subjected by any threats. The very whisper of one will make her turn from me . . .'

He interrupted. 'Totally the contrary. The prince acknowledges that you are master of her affections.'

'Consistently with her sense of honour and respect for us.'

'Tell me of her reputation, Richie.'

'You pretend that you can damage it!'

'Pretend? I pretend in the teeth of all concerned to establish her happiness and yours, and nothing human

shall stop me. I have you grateful to me before your old dad lays his head on his last pillow. And that reminds me : I surrender my town house and furniture to you. Waddy has received the word. By the way, should you hear of a good doctor for heart-disease, tell me : I have my fears for the poor soul.'

He stood up, saying, 'Richie, I am not like Jorian, to whom a lodging-house dinner is no dinner, and an irreparable loss, but I must have air. I go forth on a stroll.'

It was impossible for me to allow it. I stopped him.

We were in the midst of a debate as to his right of personal freedom, upon the singularity of which he commented with sundry ejaculations, when Temple arrived and General Goodwin sent up his card. Temple and I left the General closeted with my father, and stood at the street-door. He had seen the princess, having at her request been taken to present his respects to her by Janet. How she looked, what she said, he was dull in describing ; he thought her lively, though she was pale. She had mentioned my name, 'kindly,' he observed. And he knew, or suspected, the General to be an emissary from the prince. But he could not understand the exact nature of the complication, and plagued me with a mixture of blunt inquiries and the delicate reserve proper to him so much that I had to look elsewhere for counsel and sympathy. Janet had told him everything ; still he was plunged in wonder, tempting me to think the lawyer's mind of necessity bourgeois, for the value of a sentiment seemed to have no weight in his estimation of the case. Nor did he appear disinclined to excuse my father. Some of his remarks partly swayed me, in spite of my seeing that they were based on the supposition of an 'all for love' adventure of a mad princess. They whispered a little hope, when I was adoring her

passionately for being the reverse of whatever might have given hope a breath.

General Goodwin, followed by my father, came down and led me aside after I had warned Temple not to let my father elude him. The General was greatly ruffled. 'Clara tells me she can rely on you,' he said. 'I am at the end of my arguments with that man, short of sending him to the lock-up. You will pardon me, Mr. Harry; I foresaw the scrapes in store for you, and advised you.'

'You did, General,' I confessed. 'Will you tell me what it is Prince Ernest is in dread of?'

'A pitiable scandal, sir; and if he took my recommendation, he would find instant means of punishing the man who dares to threaten him. You know it.'

I explained that I was aware of the threat, not of the degree of the prince's susceptibility; and asked him if he had seen the princess.

'I have had the honour,' he replied, stiffly. 'You gain nothing with her by this infamous proceeding.'

I swallowed my anger, and said, 'Do you accuse me, General?'

'I do not accuse you,' he returned, unbendingly. 'You chose your path some ten or twelve years ago, and you must take the consequences. I foresaw it; but this I will say, I did not credit the man with his infernal cleverness. If I speak to you at all, I must speak my mind. I thought him a mere buffoon and spendthrift, flying his bar-sinister story for the sake of distinction. He has schemed up to this point successfully: he has the prince in his toils. *I* would cut through them, as I have informed Prince Ernest. I daresay different positions lead to different reasonings; the fellow appears to have a fascination over him. Your father, Mr. Harry, is guilty now—he is guilty, I reiterate, now of a piece of

iniquity that makes me ashamed to own him for a countryman.'

The General shook himself erect. 'Are you unable to keep him in?' he asked.

My nerves were pricking and stinging with the insults I had to listen to, and conscience's justification of them.

He repeated the question.

'I will do what I can,' I said, unsatisfactorily to myself and to him, for he transposed our situations, telling me the things he would say and do in my place; things not dissimilar to those I had already said and done, only more toweringly enunciated; and for that reason they struck me as all the more hopelessly ineffectual, and made me despair.

My dumbness excited his ire. 'Come,' said he; 'the lady is a spoilt child. She behaved foolishly; but from your point of view you should feel bound to protect her on that very account. Do your duty, young gentleman. He is, I believe, fond of you, and if so, you have him by a chain. I tell you frankly, I hold you responsible.'

His way of speaking of the princess opened an idea of the world's, in the event of her name falling into its clutches.

I said again, 'I will do what I can,' and sang out for Temple.

He was alone. My father had slipped from him to leave a card at the squire's hotel. General Goodwin touched Temple on the shoulder kindly, in marked contrast to his treatment of me, and wished us good-night.

Nothing had been heard of my father by Janet, but while I was sitting with her, at a late hour, his card was brought up, and a pencilled entreaty for an interview the next morning.

'That will suit grandada,' Janet said. 'He commissioned me before going to bed to write the same for him.'

She related that the prince was in a state of undisguised distraction. From what I could comprehend—it appeared incredible—he regarded his daughter's marriage as the solution of the difficulty, the sole way out of the meshes.

'Is not that her wish?' said Temple; perhaps with a wish of his own.

'Oh, if you think a lady like the Princess Ottilia is led by her wishes,' said Janet. Her radiant perception of an ideal in her sex (the first she ever had) made her utterly contemptuous toward the less enlightened.

We appointed the next morning at half-past eleven for my father's visit.

'Not a minute later,' Janet said in my ear, urgently. 'Don't—don't let him move out of your sight, Harry! The princess is convinced you are not to blame.'

I asked her whether she had any knowledge of the squire's designs.

'I have not, on my honour,' she answered. 'But I hope . . . It is so miserable to think of this disgraceful thing! She is too firm to give way. She does not blame you. I am sure I do not; only, Harry, one always feels that if one were in another's place, in a case like this, I could and would command him. I would have him obey me. One is not born to accept disgrace even from a father. I should say, "You shall not stir, if you mean to act dishonourably." One is justified, I am sure, in breaking a tie of relationship that involves you in dishonour. Grandada has not spoken a word to me on the subject. I catch at straws. This thing burns me! Oh, good-night, Harry. I can't sleep.'

'Good-night,' she called softly to Temple on the stairs below. I heard the poor fellow murmuring good-night to himself in the street, and thought him happier than I. He slept at a room close to the hotel.

A note from Clara Goodwin adjured me, by her memory of the sweet, brave, gracious fellow she loved in other days, to be worthy of what I had been. The General had unnerved her reliance on me.

I sat up for my father until long past midnight. When he came his appearance reminded me of the time of his altercation with Baroness Turckems under the light of the blazing curtains : he had supped and drunk deeply, and he very soon proclaimed that I should find him invincible, which, as far as insensibility to the strongest appeals to him went, he was.

' Deny you love her, deny she loves you, deny you are one—I knot you fast ! '

He had again seen Prince Ernest ; so he said, declaring that the Prince positively desired the marriage ; would have it. ' And I,' he dramatized their relative situations, ' consented.'

After my experience of that night, I forgive men who are unmoved by displays of humour. Commonly we think it should be irresistible. His description of the thin-skinned sensitive prince striving to run and dodge for shelter from him, like a fever-patient pursued by a North-easter, accompanied by dozens of quaint similes full of his mental laughter, made my loathing all the more acute. But I had not been an equal match for him previous to his taking wine ; it was waste of breath and heart to contend with him. I folded my arms tight, sitting rigidly silent, and he dropped on the sofa luxuriously.

' Bed, Richie ! ' he waved to me. ' You drink no wine, you cannot stand dissipation as I do. Bed, my dear boy ! I am a God, sir, inaccessible to mortal ailments ! Seriously, dear boy, I have never known an illness in my life. I have killed my hundreds of poor devils who were for imitating me. This I boast—I boast constitution. And

I fear, Richie, you have none of my superhuman strength. Added to that, I know I am watched over. I ask—I have: I scheme—the tricks are in my hand! It may be the doing of my mother in heaven; there is the fact for you to reflect on. "Stand not in my way, nor follow me too far," would serve me for a motto admirably, and you can put it in Latin, Richie. Bed! You shall turn your scholarship to account as I do my genius in your interest. On my soul, that motto in Latin will requite me. Now to bed.'

'No,' said I. 'You have got away from me once. I shall keep you in sight and hearing, if I have to lie at your door for it. You will go with me to London to-morrow. I shall treat you as a man I have to guard, and I shall not let you loose before I am quite sure of you.'

'Loose!' he exclaimed, throwing up an arm and a leg.

'I mean, sir, that you shall be in my presence wherever you are, and I will take care you don't go far and wide. It 's useless to pretend astonishment. I don't argue and I don't beseech any further: I just sit on guard, as I would over a powder-cask.'

My father raised himself on an elbow. 'The explosion,' he said, examining his watch, 'occurred at about five minutes to eleven—we are advancing into the morning—last night. I received on your behalf the congratulations of friends Loftus, Alton, Segrave, and the rest, at that hour. So, my dear Richie, you are sitting on guard over the empty magazine.'

I listened with a throbbing forehead, and controlled the choking in my throat, to ask him whether he had touched the newspapers.

'Ay, dear lad, I have sprung my mine in them,' he replied.

'You have sent word——?'

'I have despatched a paragraph to the effect, that the

prince and princess have arrived to ratify the nuptial preliminaries.'

'You expect it to appear this day?'

'Or else my name and influence are curiously at variance with the confidence I repose in them, Richie.'

'Then I leave you to yourself,' I said. 'Prince Ernest knows he has to expect this statement in the papers?'

'We trumped him with that identical court-card, Richie.'

'Very well. To-morrow, after we have been to my grandfather, you and I part company for good, sir. It costs me too much.'

'Dear old Richie,' he laughed, gently. 'And now to bye-bye! My blessing on you now and always.'

He shut his eyes.

CHAPTER LI

AN ENCOUNTER SHOWING MY FATHER'S GENIUS IN A STRONG LIGHT

THE morning was sultry with the first rising of the sun. I knew that Ottilia and Janet would be out. For myself, I dared not leave the house. I sat in my room, harried by the most penetrating snore which can ever have afflicted wakeful ears. It proclaimed so deep-seated a peacefulness in the bosom of the disturber, and was so arrogant, so ludicrous, and inaccessible to remonstrance, that it sounded like a renewal of our midnight altercation on the sleeper's part. Prolonged now and then beyond all bounds, it ended in the crashing blare whereof utter wakefulness cannot imagine honest sleep to be capable, but a playful melody twirled back to the regular note. He was fast asleep on the sitting-room sofa, while I

walked fretting and panting. To this twinship I seemed condemned. In my heart nevertheless there was a reserve of wonderment at his apparent astuteness and resolution, and my old love for him whispered disbelief in his having disgraced me. Perhaps it was wilful self-deception. It helped me to meet him with a better face.

We both avoided the subject of our difference for some time : he would evidently have done so altogether, and used his best and sweetest manner to divert me : but when I struck on it, asking him if he had indeed told me the truth last night, his features clouded as though with an effort of patience. To my consternation, he suddenly broke away, with his arms up, puffing and stammering, stamping his feet. He would have a truce —he insisted on a truce, I understood him to exclaim, and that I was like a woman, who would and would not, and wanted a master. He raved of the gallant down-rightedness of the young bloods of his day, and how splendidly this one and that had compassed their ends by winning great ladies, lawfully, or otherwise. For several minutes he was in a state of frenzy, appealing to his pattern youths of a bygone generation, as to moral principles—stuttering, and of a dark red hue from the neck to the temples. I refrained from a scuffle of tongues. Nor did he excuse himself after he had cooled. His hand touched instinctively for his pulse, and, with a glance at the ceiling, he exclaimed, ' Good Lord ! ' and brought me to his side. ' These wigwam houses check my circulation,' said he. ' Let us go out—let us break-fast on board.'

The open air restored him, and he told me that he had been merely oppressed by the architect of the inferior classes, whose ceiling sat on his head. My nerves, he remarked to me, were very exciteable. ' You should take your wine, Richie,—you require it. Your dear mother

had a low-toned nervous system.' I was silent, and followed him, at once a captive and a keeper.

This day of slackened sails and a bright sleeping water kept the yachtsmen on land ; there was a crowd to meet the morning boat. Foremost among those who stepped out of it was the yellow-haired Eckart, little suspecting what the sight of him signalled to me. I could scarcely greet him at all, for in him I perceived that my father had fully committed himself to his plot, and left me nothing to hope. Eckart said something of Prince Hermann. As we were walking off the pier, I saw Janet conversing with Prince Ernest, and the next minute Hermann himself was one of the group. I turned to Eckart for an explanation.

'Didn't I tell you he called at your house in London, and travelled down with me this morning!' said Eckart.

My father looked in the direction of the princes, but his face was for the moment no index. They bowed to Janet, and began talking hurriedly in the triangle of road between her hotel, the pier, and the way to the villas : passing on, and coming to a full halt, like men who are not reserving their minds. My father stept out toward them. He was met by Prince Ernest. Hermann turned his back.

It being the hour of the appointment, I delivered Eckart over to Temple's safe-keeping, and went up to Janet. 'Don't be late, Harry,' she said.

I asked her if she knew the object of the meeting appointed by my grandfather.

She answered impatiently, 'Do get him away from the prince.' And then : 'I ought to tell you the princess is well, and so on—pardon me just now : Grandada is kept waiting, and I don't like it.'

Her actual dislike was to see Prince Ernest in dialogue with my father, it seemed to me ; and the manner of both,

which was, one would have said, intimate, anything but the manner of adversaries. Prince Ernest appeared to affect a pleasant humour ; he twice, after shaking my father's hand, stepped back to him, as if to renew some impression. Their attitude declared them to be on the best of terms. Janet withdrew her attentive eyes from observing them, and threw a world of meaning into her abstracted gaze at me. My father's advance put her to flight.

Yet she gave him the welcome of a high-bred young woman when he entered the drawing-room of my grandfather's hotel-suite. She was alone, and she obliged herself to accept conversation graciously. He recommended her to try the German Baths for the squire's gout, and evidently amused her with his specific probations for English persons designing to travel in company, that they should previously live together in a house with a collection of undisciplined chambermaids, a musical footman, and a mad cook : to learn to accommodate their tempers. 'I would add a touch of earthquake, Miss Ilchester, just to make sure that all the party know one another's edges before starting.' This was too far a shot of nonsense for Janet, whose native disposition was to refer to lunacy or stupidity, or trickery, whatsoever was novel to her understanding. 'I, for my part,' said he, 'stipulate to have for comrade no man who fancies himself a born and stamped chieftain, no inveterate student of maps, and no dog with a turn for feeling himself pulled by the collar. And that reminds me you are amateur of dogs. Have you a Pomeranian boar-hound ? '

'No,' said Janet ; 'I have never even seen one.'

'That high.' My father raised his hand flat.

'Bigger than our Newfoundlands ! '

'Without exaggeration, big as a pony. You will permit me to send you one, warranted to have passed his

distemper, which can rarely be done for our human species, though here and there I venture to guarantee my man as well as my dog.'

Janet interposed her thanks, declining to take the dog, but he dwelt on the dog's charms, his youth, stature, appearance, fitness, and grandeur, earnestly. I had to relieve her apprehensions by questioning where the dog was.

'In Germany,' he said.

It was not improbable, nor less so that the dog was in Pomerania likewise.

The entry of my aunt Dorothy, followed by my grandfather, was silent.

'Be seated,' the old man addressed us in a body, to cut short particular salutations.

My father overshadowed him with drooping shoulders.

Janet wished to know whether she was to remain.

'I like you by me always,' he answered, bluff and sharp.

'We have some shopping to do,' my aunt Dorothy murmured, showing she was there against her will.

'Do you shop out of London?' said my father; and for some time he succeeded in making us sit for the delusive picture of a comfortable family meeting.

My grandfather sat quite still, Janet next to him. 'When you 've finished, Mr. Richmond,' he remarked.

'Mr. Beltham, I was telling Miss Beltham that I join in the abuse of London exactly because I love it. A paradox! she says. But we seem to be effecting a kind of insurance on the life of the things we love best by crying them down violently. You have observed it? Denounce them—they endure for ever! So I join any soul on earth in decrying our dear London. The naughty old City can bear it.'

There was a clearing of throats. My aunt Dorothy's foot tapped the floor.

'But I presume you have done me the honour to invite me to this conference on a point of business, Mr. Beltham?' said my father, admonished by the hint.

'I have, sir,' the squire replied.

'And I also have a point. And, in fact, it is urgent, and with your permission, Mr. Beltham, I will lead the way.'

'No, sir, if you please. I 'm a short speaker, and go to it at once, and I won't detain you a second after you 've answered me.'

My father nodded to this, with the conciliatory comment that it was business-like.

The old man drew out his pocket-book.

'You paid a debt,' he said deliberately, 'amounting to twenty-one thousand pounds to my grandson's account.'

'Oh! a debt! I did, sir. Between father and boy, dad and lad; debts! . . . but use your own terms, I pray you.'

'I don't ask you where that money is now. I ask you to tell me where you got it from.'

'You speak bluntly, my dear sir.'

'You won't answer, then?'

'You ask the question as a family matter? I reply with alacrity, to the best of my ability: and with my hand on my heart, Mr. Beltham, let me assure you, I very heartily desire the information to be furnished to me. Or rather—why should I conceal it? The sources are irregular, but a child could toddle its way to them: you take my indication. Say that I obtained it from my friends. *My* friends, Mr. Beltham, are of the kind requiring squeezing. Government, as my chum and good comrade, Jorian DeWitt, is fond of saying, is a sponge—a thing that when you dive deep enough to catch it gives liberal supplies, but will assuredly otherwise reverse the

process by acting the part of an absorbent. I get what I get by force of arms, or I might have perished long since.'

'Then you don't know where you got it from, sir?'

'Technically, you are correct, sir.'

'A bird didn't bring it, and you didn't find it in the belly of a fish.'

'Neither of these prodigies. They have occurred in books I am bound to believe; they did *not* happen to me.'

'You swear to me you don't know the man, woman, or committee, who gave you that sum?'

'I do not know, Mr. Beltham. In an extraordinary history, extraordinary circumstances! I have experienced so many that I am surprised at nothing.'

'You suppose you got it from some fool?'

'Oh! if you choose to indict Government collectively?'

'You pretend you got it from Government?'

'I am termed a Pretender by some, Mr. Beltham. The facts are these: I promised to refund the money, and I fulfilled the promise. There you have the only answer I can make to you. Now to my own affair. I come to request you to demand the hand of the Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld on behalf of my son Harry, your grandson; and I possess the assurance of the prince, her father, that it will be granted. Doubtless you, sir, are of as old a blood as the prince himself. You will acknowledge that the honour brought to the family by an hereditary princess is considerable: it is something. I am prepared to accompany you to his Highness, or not, as you please. It is but a question of dotation, and a selection from one or two monosyllables.'

Janet shook her dress.

The squire replied: 'We 'll take that up presently. I haven't quite done. Will you tell me what agent paid you the sum of money?'

'The usual agent—a solicitor, Mr. Beltham; a gentleman whose business lay amongst the aristocracy; he is defunct; and a very worthy old gentleman he was, with a remarkable store of anecdotes of his patrons, very discreetly told: for you never heard a name from him.'

'You took him for an agent of Government, did you? why?'

'To condense a long story, sir, the kernel of the matter is, that almost from the hour I began to stir for the purpose of claiming my rights—which are transparent enough—this old gentleman—certainly from no sinister motive, I may presume—commenced the payment of an annuity; not sufficient for my necessities, possibly, but warrant of an agreeable sort for encouraging my expectations; although oddly, this excellent old Mr. Bannerbridge invariably served up the dish in a sauce that did not agree with it, by advising me of the wish of the donator that I should abandon my Case. I consequently, in common with my friends, performed a little early lesson in arithmetic, and we came to the one conclusion open to reflective minds—namely, that I was feared.'

My aunt Dorothy looked up for the first time.

'Janet and I have some purchases to make,' she said.

The squire signified sharply that she must remain where she was.

'I think aunty wants fresh air; she had a headache last night,' said Janet.

I suggested that, as my presence did not seem to be required, I could take her on my arm for a walk to the pier-head.

Her face was burning; she would gladly have gone out, but the squire refused to permit it, and she nodded over her crossed hands, saying that she was in no hurry.

'Ha! I am,' quoth he.

'Dear Miss Beltham!' my father ejaculated solicitously.

'Here, sir, oblige me by attending to me,' cried the squire, fuming and blinking. 'I sent for you on a piece of business. You got this money through a gentleman, a solicitor, named Bannerbridge, did you?'

'His name was Bannerbridge, Mr. Beltham.'

'Dorothy, you knew a Mr. Bannerbridge?'

She faltered: 'I knew him. . . . Harry was lost in the streets of London when he was a little fellow, and the Mr. Bannerbridge I knew found him and took him to his house, and was very kind to him.'

'What was his Christian name?'

I gave them: 'Charles Adolphus.'

'The identical person!' exclaimed my father.

'Oh! you admit it,' said the squire. 'Ever seen him since the time Harry was lost, Dorothy?'

'Yes,' she answered. 'I have heard he is dead.'

'Did you see him shortly before his death?'

'I happened to see him a short time before.'

'He was your man of business, was he?'

'For such little business as I had to do.'

'You were sure you could trust him, eh?'

'Yes.'

My aunt Dorothy breathed deeply.

'By God, ma'am, you 're a truthful woman!'

The old man gave her a glare of admiration.

It was now my turn to undergo examination, and summoned by his apostrophe to meet his eyes, I could appreciate the hardness of the head I had to deal with.

'Harry, I beg your pardon beforehand; I want to get at facts; I must ask you what you know about where the money came from?'

I spoke of my attempts to discover the whence and wherefore of it.

'Government? eh?' he sneered.

'I really can't judge whether it came from that quarter,' said I.

'What do you think ?—think it likely ?'

I thought it unlikely, and yet likelier than that it should have come from an individual.

'Then you don't suspect any particular person of having sent it in the nick of time, Harry Richmond ?'

I replied: 'No, sir; unless you force me to suspect you.'

He jumped in his chair, astounded and wrathful, confounded me for insinuating that he was a Bedlamite, and demanded the impudent reason of my suspecting him to have been guilty of the infernal folly.

I had but the reason to instance that he was rich and kind at heart.

'Rich! kind!' he bellowed. 'Just excuse me—I must ask for the purpose of my inquiry;—there, tell me, how much do you believe you 've got of that money remaining ? None o' that Peterborough style of counting in the back of your pate. Say!'

There was a dreadful silence.

My father leaned persuasively forward.

'Mr. Beltham, I crave permission to take up the word. Allow me to remind you of the prize Harry has won. The prince awaits you to bestow on him the hand of his daughter——'

'Out with it, Harry,' shouted the squire.

'Not to mention Harry's seat in Parliament,' my father resumed, 'he has a princess to wife, indubitably one of the most enviable positions in the country! It is unnecessary to count on future honours; they may be alluded to. In truth, sir, we make him the first man in the country. Not necessarily Premier: you take my meaning: he possesses the combination of social influence and standing with political achievements, and rank and riches in addition——'

'I 'm speaking to my grandson, sir,' the squire rejoined, shaking himself like a man rained on. 'I 'm waiting for a plain answer, and no lie. You 've already confessed as much as that the money you told me on your honour you put out to interest ;—psh !—for my grandson was smoke. Now let 's hear him.'

My father called out : 'I claim a hearing ! The money you speak of *was* put out to the very highest interest. You have your grandson in Parliament, largely acquainted with the principal members of society, husband of an hereditary princess ! You have only at this moment to propose for her hand. I guarantee it to you. With that money I have won him everything. Not that I would intimate to you that princesses are purchaseable. The point is, I knew how to employ it.'

'In two months' time, the money in the Funds in the boy's name—you told me that.'

'You had it in the Funds in Harry Richmond's name, sir.'

'Well, sir, I 'm asking him whether it 's in the Funds now.'

'Oh ! Mr. Beltham.'

'What answer 's that ? '

The squire was really confused by my father's interruption, and lost sight of me.

'I ask where it came from : I ask whether it 's squandered ? ' he continued.

'Mr. Beltham, I reply that you have only to ask for it to have it ; do so immediately.'

'What 's he saying ? ' cried the baffled old man.

'I give you a thousand times the equivalent of the money, Mr. Beltham.'

'Is the money there ? '

'The lady is here.'

'I said money, sir.'

'A priceless honour and treasure, I say emphatically.'

My grandfather's brows and mouth were gathering for storm. Janet touched his knee.

'Where the devil your understanding truckles, if you have any, I don't know,' he muttered. 'What the deuce —lady got to do with money!'

'Oh!' my father laughed lightly, 'customarily the alliance is, they say, as close as matrimony. Pardon me. To speak with becoming seriousness, Mr. Beltham, it was duly imperative that our son should be known in society, should be, you will apprehend me, advanced in station, which I had to do through the ordinary political channel. There could not but be a considerable expenditure for such a purpose.'

'In Balls, and dinners!'

'In everything that builds a young gentleman's repute.'

'You swear to me you gave your Balls and dinners, and the lot, for Harry Richmond's sake?'

'On my veracity, I did, sir!'

'Please don't talk like a mountebank. I don't want any of your roundabout words for truth; we're not writing a Bible essay. I try my best to be civil.'

My father beamed on him.

'I guarantee you succeed, sir. Nothing on earth can a man be so absolutely sure of as to succeed in civility, if he honestly tries at it. Jorian DeWitt,—by the way, you may not know him—an esteemed old friend of mine, says —that is, he said once—to a tolerably impudent fellow whom he had disconcerted with a capital retort, "You may try to be a gentleman, and blunder at it, but if you will only try to be his humble servant, we are certain to establish a common footing." Jorian, let me tell you, is a wit worthy of our glorious old days.'

My grandfather eased his heart with a plunging breath.

'Well, sir, I didn't ask you here for your opinion or your friend's, and I don't care for modern wit.'

'Nor I, Mr. Beltham, nor I! It has the reek of stable straw. We are of one mind on that subject. The thing slouches, it sprawls. It—to quote Jorian once more—is like a dirty, idle, little stupid boy who cannot learn his lesson and plays the fool with the alphabet. You smile, Miss Ilchester: you would appreciate Jorian. Modern wit is emphatically degenerate. It has no scintillation, neither thrust nor parry. I compare it to boxing, as opposed to the more beautiful science of fencing.'

'Well, sir, I don't want to hear your comparisons,' growled the squire, much oppressed. 'Stop a minute . . .'

'Half a minute to me, sir,' said my father, with a glowing reminiscence of Jorian DeWitt, which was almost too much for the combustible old man, even under Janet's admonition.

My aunt Dorothy moved her head slightly toward my father, looking on the floor, and he at once drew in.

'Mr. Beltham, I attend to you submissively.'

'You do? Then tell me what brought this princess to England?'

'The conviction that Harry had accomplished his oath to mount to an eminence in his country, and had made the step she is about to take less, I will say, precipitous: though I personally decline to admit a pointed inferiority.'

'You wrote her a letter.'

'That, containing the news of the attack on him and his desperate illness, was the finishing touch to the noble lady's passion.'

'Attack? I know nothing about an attack. You wrote her a letter and wrote her a lie. You said he was dying.'

'I had the boy inanimate on my breast when I despatched the epistle.'

'You said he had only a few days to live.'

'So in my affliction I feared.'

'Will you swear you didn't write that letter with the intention of drawing her over here to have her in your power, so that you might threaten you 'd blow on her reputation if she or her father held out against you and all didn't go as you fished for it ? '

My father raised his head proudly.

'I divide your query into two parts. I wrote, sir, to bring her to his side. I did not write with any intention to threaten.'

'You 've done it, though.'

'I have done this,' said my father, toweringly : 'I have used the power placed in my hands by Providence to overcome the hesitations of a gentleman whose illustrious rank predisposes him to sacrifice his daughter's happiness to his pride of birth and station. Can any one confute me when I assert that the princess loves Harry Richmond ? '

I walked abruptly to one of the windows, hearing a pitiable wrangling on the theme. My grandfather vowed she had grown wiser, my father protested that she was willing and anxious ; Janet was appealed to. In a strangely-sounding underbreath, she said, 'The princess does not wish it.'

'You hear that, Mr. Richmond ? ' cried the squire.

He returned : 'Can Miss Ilchester say that the Princess Ottilia does not passionately love my son Harry Richmond ? The circumstances warrant me in beseeching a direct answer.'

She uttered : 'No.'

I looked at her ; she at me.

'You can conduct a case, Richmond,' the squire remarked.

My father rose to his feet. 'I can conduct my son to happiness and greatness, my dear sir; but to some extent I require your grandfatherly assistance; and I urge you now to present your respects to the prince and princess, and judge yourself of his Highness's disposition for the match. I assure you in advance that he welcomes the proposal.'

'I do not believe it,' said Janet, rising.

My aunt Dorothy followed her example, saying: 'In justice to Harry the proposal should be made. At least it will settle this dispute.'

Janet stared at her, and the squire threw his head back with an amazed interjection.

'What! You 're for it now? Why, at breakfast you were all t' other way! You didn't want this meeting because you pooh-poohed the match.'

'I do think you should go,' she answered. 'You have given Harry your promise, and if he empowers you, it is right to make the proposal, and immediately, I think.'

She spoke feverishly, with an unsweet expression of face, that seemed to me to indicate vexedness at the squire's treatment of my father.

'Harry,' she asked me in a very earnest fashion, 'is it your desire? Tell your grandfather that it is, and that you want to know your fate. Why should there be any dispute on a fact that can be ascertained by crossing a street? Surely it is trifling.'

Janet stooped to whisper in the squire's ear.

He caught the shock of unexpected intelligence apparently; faced about, gazed up, and cried: 'You too! But I haven't done here. I 've got to cross-examine . . . Pretend, do you mean? Pretend I 'm ready to go? I can release this prince just as well here as there.'

Janet laughed faintly.

'I should advise your going, grandada.'

'*You* a weathercock woman!' he reproached her, quite mystified, and fell to rubbing his head. 'Suppose I go to be snubbed?'

'The prince is a gentleman, grandada. Come with me. We will go alone. You can relieve the prince, and protect him.'

My father nodded: 'I approve.'

'And grandada—but it will not so much matter if we are alone, though,' Janet said.

'Speak out.'

'See the princess as well; she must be present.'

'I leave it to you,' he said, crestfallen.

Janet pressed my aunt Dorothy's hand.

'Aunty, you were right, you are always right. This state of suspense is bad all round, and it is infinitely worse for the prince and princess.'

My aunt Dorothy accepted the eulogy with a singular trembling wrinkle of the forehead.

She evidently understood that Janet had seen her wish to get released.

For my part, I shared my grandfather's stupefaction at their unaccountable changes. It appeared almost as if my father had won them over to baffle him. The old man tried to insist on their sitting down again, but Janet perseveringly smiled and smiled until he stood up. She spoke to him softly. He was one black frown; displeased with her; obedient, however.

Too soon after, I had the key to the enigmatical scene. At the moment I was contemptuous of riddles, and heard with idle ears Janet's promptings to him and his replies. 'It would be so much better to settle it here,' he said. She urged that it could not be settled here without the whole burden and responsibility falling upon him.

'Exactly,' interposed my father, triumphing.

Dorothy Beltham came to my side, and said, as if

speaking to herself, while she gazed out of window, 'If a refusal, it should come from the prince.' She dropped her voice: 'The money has not been spent? Has it? Has any part of it been spent? Are you sure you have more than three parts of it?'

Now, that she should be possessed by the spirit of parsimony on my behalf at such a time as this, was to my conception insanely comical, and her manner of expressing it was too much for me. I kept my laughter under to hear her continue: 'What numbers are flocking on the pier! and there is no music yet. Tell me, Harry, that the money is all safe; nearly all; it is important to know; you promised economy.'

'Music did you speak of, Miss Beltham?' My father bowed to her gallantly. 'I chanced to overhear you. My private band performs to the public at midday.'

She was obliged to smile to excuse his interruption.

'What 's that? whose band?' said the squire, bursting out of Janet's hand. 'A private band?'

Janet had a difficulty in resuming her command of him. The mention of the private band made him very restive.

'I 'm not acting on my own judgement at all in going to these foreign people,' he said to Janet. 'Why go? I can have it out here and an end to it, without bothering them and their interpreters.'

He sang out to me: 'Harry, do you want me to go through this form for you? —mn'd unpleasant!'

My aunt Dorothy whispered in my ear: 'Yes! yes!'

'I feel tricked!' he muttered, and did not wait for me to reply before he was again questioning my aunt Dorothy concerning Mr. Bannerbridge, and my father as to 'that sum of money.' But his method of interrogation was confused and pointless. The drift of it was totally obscure.

'I 'm off my head to-day,' he said to Janet, with a side-shot of his eye at my father.

'You waste time and trouble, grandada,' said she.

He vowed that he was being bewildered, bothered by us all; and I thought I had never seen him so far below his level of energy; but I had not seen him condescend to put himself upon a moderately fair footing with my father. The truth was, that Janet had rigorously schooled him to bridle his temper, and he was no match for the voluble easy man without the freest play of his tongue.

'This prince!' he kept ejaculating.

'Won't you understand, grandada, that you relieve him, and make things clear by going?' Janet said.

He begged her fretfully not to be impatient, and hinted that she and he might be acting the part of dupes, and was for pursuing his inauspicious cross-examination in spite of his blundering, and the 'Where am I now?' which pulled him up. My father, either talking to my aunt Dorothy, to Janet, or to me, on ephemeral topics, scarcely noticed him, except when he was questioned, and looked secure of success in the highest degree consistent with perfect calmness.

'So you say you tell me to go, do you?' the squire called to me. 'Be good enough to stay here and wait. I don't see that anything 's gained by my going: it 's damned hard on me, having to go to a man whose language I don't know, and he don't know mine, on a business we 're all of us in a muddle about. I 'll do it if it 's right. You 're sure?'

He glanced at Janet. She nodded.

I was looking for this quaint and, to me, incomprehensible interlude to commence with the departure of the squire and Janet, when a card was handed in by one of the hotel-waiters.

'Another prince!' cried the squire. 'These Germans seem to grow princes like potatoes—dozens to a root! Who 's the card for? Ask him to walk up. Show him into a quiet room. Does he speak English?'

'Does Prince Hermann of—I can't pronounce the name of the place—speak English, Harry?' Janet asked me.

'As well as you or I,' said I, losing my inattention all at once with a mad leap of the heart.

Hermann's presence gave light, fire, and colour to the scene in which my destiny had been wavering from hand to hand without much more than amusedly interesting me, for I was sure that I had lost Ottilia; I knew that too well, and worse could not happen. I had besides lost other things that used to sustain me, and being reckless, I was contemptuous, and listened to the talk about money with sublime indifference to the subject: with an attitude, too, I daresay. But Hermann's name revived my torment. Why had he come? to persuade the squire to control my father? Nothing but that would suffer itself to be suggested, though conjectures lying in shadow underneath pressed ominously on my mind.

My father had no doubts.

'A word to you, Mr. Beltham, before you go to Prince Hermann. He is an emissary, we treat him with courtesy, and if he comes to diplomatize we, of course, give a patient hearing. I have only to observe in the most emphatic manner possible that I do not retract one step. I will have this marriage: I have spoken! It rests with Prince Ernest.'

The squire threw a hasty glare of his eyes back as he was hobbling on Janet's arm. She stopped short, and replied for him.

'Mr. Beltham will speak for himself, in his own name.

We are not concerned in any unworthy treatment of Prince Ernest. We protest against it.'

'Dear young lady!' said my father, graciously. 'I meet you frankly. Now tell me. I know you a gallant horsewoman: if you had lassoed the noble horse of the desert would you let him run loose because of his remonstrating? Side with me, I entreat you! My son is my first thought. The pride of princes and wild horses you will find wonderfully similar, especially in the way they take their taming when once they feel they are positively caught. We show him we have him fast—he falls into our paces on the spot! For Harry's sake—for the princess's, I beg you exert your universally-deservedly acknowledged influence. Even now—and you frown on me!—I cannot find it in my heart to wish you the sweet and admirable woman of the world you are destined to be, though you would comprehend me and applaud me, for I could not—no, not to win your favourable opinion! —consent that you should be robbed of a single ray of your fresh maidenly youth. If you must misjudge me, I submit. It is the price I pay for seeing you young and lovely. Prince Ernest is, credit me, not unworthily treated by me, if life is a battle, and the prize of it to the General's head. I implore you'—he lured her with the dimple of a lurking smile—'do not seriously blame your afflicted senior, if we are to differ. I am vastly your elder: you instil the doubt whether I am by as much the wiser of the two; but the father of Harry Richmond claims to know best what will ensure his boy's felicity. Is he rash? Pronounce me guilty of an excessive anxiety for my son's welfare; say that I am too old to read the world with the accuracy of a youthful intelligence: call me indiscreet: stigmatize me unlucky; the severest sentence a judge'—he bowed to her deferentially—'can utter; only do not cast a gaze of rebuke on me because

my labour is for my son—my utmost devotion. And we know, Miss Ilchester, that the princess honours him with her love. I protest in all candour, I treat love as love ; not as a weight in the scale ; it is the heavenly power which dispenses with weighing ! its ascendancy . . .'

The squire could endure no more, and happily so, for my father was losing his remarkably moderated tone, and threatening polysyllables. He had followed Janet, step for step, at a measured distance, drooping toward her with his winningest air, while the old man pulled at her arm to get her out of hearing of the obnoxious flatterer. She kept her long head in profile, trying creditably not to appear discourteous to one who addressed her by showing an open ear, until the final bolt made by the frenzied old man dragged her through the doorway. His neck was shortened behind his collar as though he shrugged from the blast of a bad wind. I believe that, on the whole, Janet was pleased. I will wager that, left to herself, she would have been drawn into an answer, if not an argument. Nothing would have made her resolution swerve, I admit.

They had not been out of the room three seconds when my aunt Dorothy was called to join them. She had found time to say that she hoped the money was intact.

CHAPTER LII

STRANGE REVELATIONS, AND MY GRANDFATHER HAS HIS LAST OUTBURST

My father and I stood at different windows, observing the unconcerned people below.

' Did you scheme to bring Prince Hermann over here as well ? ' I asked him.

He replied laughing: 'I really am not the wonderful wizard you think me, Richie. I left Prince Ernest's address as mine with Waddy in case the Frau Feld-Marschall should take it into her head to come. Further than that you must question Providence, which I humbly thank for its unfailing support, down to unexpected trifles. Only this—to you and to all of them: nothing bends me. I will not be robbed of the fruit of a life-time.'

'Supposing I refuse?'

'You refuse, Richie, to restore the princess her character and the prince his serenity of mind at their urgent supplication? I am utterly unable to suppose it. You are married in the papers this morning. I grieve to say that the position of Prince Hermann is supremely ridiculous. I am bound to add he is a bold boy. It requires courage in one of the pretenders to the hand of the princess to undertake the office of intercessor, for he must know—the man must know in his heart that he is doing her no kindness. He does not appeal to me, you see. I have shown that my arrangements are unalterable. What he will make of your grandad! . . . Why on earth he should have been sent to—of all men in the world—your grandad, Richie!'

I was invited to sympathetic smiles of shrewd amusement.

He caught sight of friends, and threw up the window, saluting them.

The squire returned with my aunt Dorothy and Janet to behold the detested man communicating with the outer world from his own rooms. He shouted unceremoniously, 'Shut that window!' and it was easy to see that he had come back heavily armed for the offensive. 'Here, Mr. Richmond, I don't want all men to know you 're in my apartments.'

'I forgot, sir, temporarily,' said my father, 'I had vacated the rooms for your convenience—be assured.'

An explanation on the subject of the rooms ensued between the old man and the ladies ;—it did not improve his temper.

His sense of breeding, nevertheless, forced him to remark, 'I can't thank you, sir, for putting me under an obligation I should never have incurred myself.'

'Oh, I was happy to be of use to the ladies, Mr. Beltham, and require no small coin of exchange,' my father responded with the flourish of a pacifying hand. 'I have just heard from a posse of friends that the marriage is signalled in this morning's papers—numberless congratulations, I need not observe.'

'No, don't,' said the squire. 'Nobody 'll understand them here, and I needn't ask you to sit down, because I don't want you to stop. I 'll soon have done now ; the game 's played. Here, Harry, quick ; has all that money been spent—no offence to you, but as a matter of business ? '

'Not all, sir,' I was able to say.

'Half ? '

'Yes, I think so.'

'Three parts ? '

'It may be.'

'And liabilities besides ? '

'There are some.'

'You 're not a liar. That 'll do for you.'

He turned to my aunt : her eyes had shut.

'Dorothy, you 've sold out twenty-five thousand pounds' worth of stock. You 're a truthful woman, as I said, and so I won't treat you like a witness in a box. You gave it to Harry to help him out of his scrape. Why, short of staring lunacy, did you pass it through the hands of this man ? He sweated his thousands out of it at the

start. Why did you make a secret of it to make the man think his nonsense ?—Ma'am, behave like a lady and my daughter,' he cried, fronting her, for the sudden and blunt attack had slackened her nerves ; she moved as though to escape, and was bewildered. I stood overwhelmed. No wonder she had attempted to break up the scene.

'Tell me your object, Dorothy Beltham, in passing the money through the hands of this man ? Were you for helping him to be a man of his word ? Help the boy—that I understand. However, you were mistress of your money ! I 've no right to complain, if you will go spending a fortune to whitewash the blackamoor ! Well, it 's your own, you 'll say. So it is : so 's your character ! '

The egregious mildness of these interjections could not long be preserved.

'You deceived me, ma'am. You wouldn't build school-houses, you couldn't subscribe to Charities, you acted parsimony, to pamper a scamp and his young scholar ! You went to London—you did it in cool blood ; you went to your stockbroker, and from the stockbroker to the Bank, and you sold out stock to fling away this big sum. I went to the Bank on business, and the books were turned over for my name, and there at " Beltham " I saw quite by chance the cross of the pen, and I saw your folly, ma'am ; I saw it all in a shot. I went to the Bank on my own business, mind that. Ha ! you know me by this time ; I loathe spying ; the thing jumped out of the book ; I couldn't help seeing. Now I don't reckon how many positive fools go to make one superlative humbug ; you 're one of the lot, and I 've learnt it.'

My father airily begged leave to say : 'As to positive and superlative, Mr. Beltham, the three degrees of comparison are no longer of service except to the trader. I do not consider them to exist for ladies. Your positive

is always particularly open to dispute, and I venture to assert I cap you your superlative ten times over.'

He talked the stuff for a diversion, presenting in the midst of us an incongruous image of smiles that filled me with I knew not what feelings of angry alienation, until I was somewhat appeased by the idea that he had not apprehended the nature of the words just spoken.

It seemed incredible, yet it was true ; it was proved to be so to me by his pricking his ears and his attentive look at the mention of the word prepossessing him in relation to the money : Government.

The squire said something of Government to my aunt Dorothy, with sarcastical emphasis.

As the observation was unnecessary, and was wantonly thrown in by him, she seized on it to escape from her compromising silence : ' I know nothing of Government or its ways.'

She murmured further, and looked at Janet, who came to her aid, saying : ' Grandada, we 've had enough talk of money, money ! All is done that you wanted done. Stocks, Shares, Banks—we 've gone through them all. Please, finish ! Please, do. You have only to state what you have heard from Prince Hermann.'

Janet gazed in the direction of my father, carefully avoiding my eyes, but evidently anxious to shield my persecuted aunty.

' Speaking of Stocks and Shares, Miss Ilchester,' said my father, ' I myself would as soon think of walking into a field of scytheblades in full activity as of dabbling in them. One of the few instances I remember of our Jorian stooping to a pun, is upon the contango : ingenious truly, but objectionable, because a pun. I shall not be guilty of repeating it. " The stock-market is the national snap-dragon bowl," he says, and is very amusing upon the

Jews; whether quite fairly, Mr. Beltham knows better than I, on my honour.'

He appealed lightly to the squire, for thus he danced on the crater's brink, and had for answer,—

'You 're a cool scoundrel, Richmond.'

'I choose to respect you, rather in spite of yourself, I fear, sir,' said my father, bracing up.

'Did you hear my conversation with my daughter?'

'I heard, if I may say so, the lion taking his share of it.'

'All roaring to you, was it?'

'Mr. Beltham, we have our little peculiarities; I am accustomed to think of a steam-vent when I hear you indulging in a sentence of unusual length, and I hope it is for our good, as I thoroughly believe it is for yours, that you should deliver yourself freely.'

'So you tell me; like a stage lacquey!' muttered the old man, with surprising art in caricaturing a weakness in my father's bearing, of which I was cruelly conscious, though his enunciation was flowing. He lost his naturalness through forcing for ease in the teeth of insult.

'Grandada, aunty and I will leave you,' said Janet, waxing importunate.

'When I 've done,' said he, facing his victim savagely. 'The fellow pretends he didn't understand. She 's here to corroborate. Richmond, there, my daughter, Dorothy Beltham, there 's the last of your fools and dupes. She 's a truthful woman, I 'll own, and she 'll contradict me if what I say is not the fact. That twenty-five thousand from "Government" came out of her estate.'

'Out of——'

'Out of——be damned, sir! She 's the person who paid it.'

'If the "damns" have set up, you may as well let the ladies go,' said I.

He snapped at me like a rabid dog in career.

'She 's the person—one of your petticoat "Government"—who paid—do you hear me, Richmond?—the money to help you to keep your word: to help you to give your Balls and dinners too. She—I won't say she told you, and you knew it—she paid it. She sent it through her Mr. Bannerbridge. Do you understand now? *You* had it from *her*. My God! look at the fellow!'

A dreadful gape of stupefaction had usurped the smiles on my father's countenance; his eyes rolled over, he tried to articulate, and was indeed a spectacle for an enemy. His convulsed frame rocked the syllables, as with a groan, unpleasant to hear, he called on my aunt Dorothy by successive stammering apostrophes to explain, spreading his hands wide. He called out her Christian name. Her face was bloodless.

'Address my daughter respectfully, sir, will you! I won't have your infernal familiarities!' roared the squire.

'He is my brother-in-law,' said Dorothy, reposing on the courage of her blood, now that the worst had been spoken. 'Forgive me, Mr. Richmond, for having secretly induced you to accept the loan from me.'

'Loan!' interjected the squire. 'They fell upon it like a pair of kites. You 'll find the last ghost of a bone of your loan in a bill, and well picked. They 've been doing their bills: I 've heard that.'

My father touched the points of his fingers on his forehead, straining to think, too theatrically, but in hard earnest, I believe. He seemed to be rising on tiptoe.

'Oh, madam! Dear lady! my friend! Dorothy, my sister! Better a thousand times that I had married, though I shrank from a heartless union! This money? —it is not——'

The old man broke in: 'Are you going to be a damned low vulgar comedian and tale of a trumpet up to the end,

you Richmond ? Don't think you 'll gain anything by standing there as if you were jumping your trunk from a shark. Come, sir, you 're in a gentleman's rooms ; don't pitch your voice like a young jackanapes blowing into a horn. Your gasps and your spasms, and howl of a yawning brute ! Keep your menagerie performances for your pantomime audiences. What are you meaning ? Do you pretend you 're astonished ? She 's not the first fool of a woman whose money you 've devoured, with your " Madam," and " My dear " and mouthing and elbowing your comedy tricks ; your gabble of " Government " protection, and scandalous advertisements of the by-blow of a star-coated rapscallion. If you 've a recollection of the man in you, show your back, and be off, say you 've fought against odds—I don't doubt you have, counting the constables—and own you 're a villain : plead guilty, and be off and be silent, and do no more harm. Is it " Government " still ? '

My aunt Dorothy had come round to me. She clutched my arm to restrain me from speaking, whispering : ' Harry, you can't save him. Think of your own head.'

She made me irresolute, and I was too late to check my father from falling into the trap.

' Oh ! Mr. Beltham,' he said, ' you are hard, sir. I put it to you : had you been in receipt of a secret subsidy from Government for a long course of years——'

' How long ? ' the squire interrupted.

Prompt though he would have been to dismiss the hateful person, he was not, one could see, displeased to use the whip upon so exciteable and responsive a frame. He seemed to me to be basely guilty of leading his victim on to expose himself further.

' There 's no necessity for " how long," ' I said.

The old man kept the question on his face.

My father reflected.

'I have to hit my memory, I am shattered, sir. I say, you would be justified, amply justified——'

'How long?' was reiterated.

'I can at least date it from the period of my marriage.'

'From the date when your scoundrelism first touches my family, that 's to say! So "Government" agreed to give you a stipend to support your wife!'

'Mr. Beltham, I breathe with difficulty. It was at that period, on the death of a nobleman interested in restraining me—I was his debtor for kindnesses . . . my head is whirling! I say, at that period, upon the recommendation of friends of high standing, I began to agitate for the restitution of my rights. From infancy——'

'To the deuce, your infancy! I know too much about your age. Just hark, you Richmond! none of your "I was a child" to provoke compassion from women. I mean to knock you down and make you incapable of hurting these poor foreign people you trapped. They defy you, and I 'll do my best to draw your teeth. Now for the annuity. You want one to believe you thought you frightened "Government," eh?'

'Annual proof was afforded me, sir.'

'Oh! annual! through Mr. Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge, deceased!'

Janet stepped up to my aunt Dorothy to persuade her to leave the room, but she declined, and hung by me, to keep me out of danger, as she hoped, and she prompted me with a guarding nervous squeeze of her hand on my arm to answer temperately when I was questioned: 'Harry, do you suspect Government paid that annuity?'

'Not now, certainly.'

'Tell the man who 'tis you suspect.'

My aunt Dorothy said: 'Harry is not bound to mention his suspicions.'

'Tell him yourself, then.'

'Does it matter—— ?'

'Yes, it matters. I 'll break every plank he walks on, and strip him stark till he flops down shivering into his slough—a convicted common swindler, with his dinners and Balls and his private bands! Richmond, you killed one of my daughters; t' other fed you, through her agent, this Mr. Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge, from about the date of your snaring my poor girl and carrying her off behind your postillions—your trotting undertakers!—and the hours of her life reckoned in milestones. She 's here to contradict me, if she can. Dorothy Beltham was your "Government" that paid the annuity.'

I took Dorothy Beltham into my arms. She was trembling excessively, yet found time to say, 'Bear up, dearest; keep still.' All I thought and felt foundered in tears.

For a while I heard little distinctly of the tremendous tirade which the vindictive old man, rendered thrice venomous by the immobility of the petrified large figure opposed to him, poured forth. My poor father did not speak because he could not; his arms dropped; and such was the torrent of attack, with its free play of thunder and lightning in the form of oaths, epithets, short and sharp comparisons, bitter home thrusts and most vehement imprecatory denunciations, that our protesting voices quailed. Janet plucked at my aunt Dorothy's dress to bear her away.

'I can't leave my father,' I said.

'Nor I you, dear,' said the tender woman; and so we remained to be scourged by this tongue of incarnate rage.

'You pensioner of a silly country spinster!' sounded like a return to mildness. My father's chest heaved up.

I took advantage of the lull to make myself heard: I did but heap fuel on fire, though the old man's splenetic impetus had partly abated.

'You Richmond! do you hear him? he swears he 's your son, and asks to be tied to the stake beside you. Disown him, and I 'll pay you money and thank you. I 'll thank my God for anything short of your foul blood in the family. You married the boy's mother to craze and kill her, and guttle her property. You waited for the boy to come of age to swallow what was settled on him. You wait for me to lie in my coffin to pounce on the strong-box you think me the fool to toss to a young donkey ready to ruin all his belongings for you! For nine-and-twenty years you 've sucked the veins of my family, and struck through my house like a rotting-disease. Nine-and-twenty years ago you gave a singing-lesson in my house: the pest has been in it ever since! You breed vermin in the brain, to think of you! Your wife, your son, your dupes, every soul that touches you, mildews from a blight! You were born of ropery, and you go at it straight, like a webfoot to water. What 's your boast? —your mother's disgrace! You shame your mother. Your whole life 's a ballad o' bastardy. You cry up the woman's infamy to hook at a father. You swell and strut on her pickings. You 're a cock forced from the smoke of the dunghill! You shame your mother, damned adventurer! You train your boy for a swindler after your own pattern; you twirl him in your curst harlequinade to a damnation as sure as your own. The day you crossed my threshold the devils danced on their flooring. I 've never seen the sun shine fair on me after it. With your guitar under the windows, of moonlight nights! your Spanish fopperies and trickeries! your French phrases and toeings! I was touched by a leper. You set your traps for both my girls: you caught the brown one first, did you, and flung her second for t' other, and drove a tandem of 'em to live the spangled hog you are; and down went the mother of the boy to the place

she liked better, and my other girl here—the one you cheated for her salvation—you tried to cajole her from home and me, to send her the same way down. She stuck to decency. Good Lord! you threatened to hang yourself, guitar and all. But her purse served your turn. For why? You 're a leech. I speak before ladies or I 'd rip your town-life to shreds. Your cause! your romantic history! your fine figure! every inch of you 's notched with villany! You fasten on every moneyed woman that comes in your way. You 've outdone Herod in murdering the innocents, for he didn't feed on 'em, and they 've made you fat. One thing I 'll say of you: you look the beastly thing you set yourself up for. The kindest blow to you 's to call you impostor.'

He paused, but his inordinate passion of speech was unsated: his white lips hung loose for another eruption.

I broke from my aunt Dorothy to cross over to my father, saying on the way: 'We 've heard enough, sir. You forget the cardinal point of invective, which is, not to create sympathy for the person you assail.'

'Oh! you come in with your infernal fine language, do you!' the old man thundered at me. 'I 'll just tell you at once, young fellow——'

My aunt Dorothy supplicated his attention. 'One error I must correct.' Her voice issued from a contracted throat, and was painfully thin and straining, as though the will to speak did violence to her weaker nature. 'My sister loved Mr. Richmond. It was to save her life, because I believed she loved him much and would have died, that Mr. Richmond—in pity—offered her his hand, at my wish': she bent her head: 'at my cost. It was done for me. I wished it; he obeyed me. No blame——' her dear mouth faltered. 'I am to be accused, if anybody.'

She added more firmly: 'My money would have been

his. I hoped to spare his feelings, I beg his forgiveness now, by devoting some of it, unknown to him, to assist him. That was chiefly to please myself, I see, and I am punished.'

'Well, ma'am,' said the squire, calm at white heat; 'a fool's confession ought to be heard out to the end. What about the twenty-five thousand?'

'I hoped to help my Harry.'

'Why didn't you do it openly?'

She breathed audible long breaths before she could summon courage to say: 'His father was going to make an irreparable sacrifice. I feared that if he knew this money came from me he would reject it, and persist.'

Had she disliked the idea of my father's marrying?

The old man pounced on the word sacrifice. 'What sacrifice, ma'am? What 's the sacrifice?'

I perceived that she could not without anguish, and perhaps peril of a further exposure, bring herself to speak, and explained: 'It relates to my having tried to persuade my father to marry a very wealthy lady, so that he might produce the money on the day appointed. Rail at me, sir, as much as you like. If you can't understand the circumstances without a chapter of statements, I 'm sorry for you. A great deal is due to you, I know; but I can't pay a jot of it while you go on rating my father like a madman.'

'Harry!' either my aunt or Janet breathed a warning.

I replied that I was past mincing phrases. The folly of giving the tongue an airing was upon me: I was in fact invited to continue, and animated to do it thoroughly, by the old man's expression of face, which was that of one who says, 'I give you rope,' and I dealt him a liberal amount of stock irony not worth repeating; things that any cultivated man in anger can drill and sting the Bœotian with, under the delusion that he has not lost a

particle of his self-command because of his coolness. I spoke very deliberately, and therefore supposed that the words of composure were those of prudent sense. The error was manifest. The women saw it. One who has indulged his soul in invective will not, if he has power in his hand, be robbed of his climax with impunity by a cool response that seems to trifle, and scourges.

I wound up by thanking my father for his devotion to me: I deemed it, I said, excessive and mistaken in the recent instance, but it was for me.

Upon this he awoke from his dreamy-looking stupefaction.

'Richie does me justice. He is my dear boy. He loves me: I love him. None can cheat us of that. He loves his wreck of a father. You have struck me to your feet, Mr. Beltham.'

'I don't want to see you there, sir; I want to see you go, and not stand rapping your breast-bone, sounding like a burst drum, as you are,' retorted the unappeasable old man.

I begged him in exasperation to keep his similes to himself.

Janet and my aunt Dorothy raised their voices.

My father said: 'I am broken.'

He put out a swimming hand that trembled when it rested, like that of an aged man grasping a staff. I feared for a moment he was acting, he spoke so like himself, miserable though he appeared: but it was his well-known native old style in a state of decrepitude.

'I am broken,' he repeated. 'I am like the ancient figure of mortality entering the mouth of the tomb on a sepulchral monument, somewhere, by a celebrated sculptor: I have seen it: I forget the city. I shall presently forget names of men. It is not your abuse, Mr. Beltham. I should have bowed my head to it till

the storm passed. Your facts . . . Oh! Miss Beltham, this last privilege to call you dearest of human beings! my benefactress! my blessing! Do not scorn me, madam.'

'I never did; I never will; I pitied you,' she cried, sobbing.

The squire stamped his foot.

'Madam,' my father bowed gently, 'I was under heaven's special protection—I thought so. I feel I have been robbed—I have not deserved it! Oh! madam, no: it was your generosity that I did not deserve. One of the angels of heaven persuaded me to trust in it. I did not know. . . . Adieu, madam. May I be worthy to meet you!—Ay, Mr. Beltham, your facts have committed the death-wound. You have taken the staff out of my hand: you have extinguished the light. I have existed—ay, a pensioner, unknowingly, on this dear lady's charity; to her I say no more. To you, sir, by all that is most sacred to a man—by the ashes of my mother! by the prospects of my boy! I swear the annuity was in my belief a tangible token that my claims to consideration were in the highest sources acknowledged to be just. I cannot speak! One word to you, Mr. Beltham: put me aside, I am nothing: —Harry Richmond!—his fortunes are not lost; he has a future! I entreat you—he is your grandson—give him your support; go this instant to the prince—no! you will not deny your countenance to Harry Richmond:— let him abjure my name; let me be nameless in his house. And I promise you I shall be unheard of both in Christendom and Heathendom: I have no heart except for my boy's nuptials with the princess: this one thing, to see him the husband of the fairest and noblest lady upon earth, with all the life remaining in me I pray for! I have won it for him. I have a moderate ability, immense devotion. I declare to you, sir, I have lived, actually

subsisted, on this hope! and I have directed my efforts incessantly, sleeplessly, to fortify it. I die to do it!—I implore you, sir, go to the prince. If I' (he said this touchingly)—'if I am any further in anybody's way, it is only as a fallen tree.' But his inveterate fancifulness led him to add: 'And that may bridge a cataract.'

My grandfather had been clearing his throat two or three times.

'I 'm ready to finish and get rid of you, Richmond.'

My father bowed.

'I am gone, sir. I feel I am all but tongue-tied. Think that it is Harry who petitions you to ensure his happiness. To-day I guarantee it.'

The old man turned an inquiring eyebrow upon me. Janet laid her hand on him. He dismissed the feline instinct to prolong our torture, and delivered himself briskly.

'Richmond, your last little bit of villany 's broken in the egg. I separate the boy from you: he 's not your accomplice there, I 'm glad to know. You witched the lady over to pounce on her like a fowler, you threatened her father with a scandal, if he thought proper to force the trap; swore you 'd toss her to be plucked by the gossips, eh? She 's free of you! You got your English and your Germans here to point their bills, and stretch their necks, and hiss, if this gentleman—and your newspapers!—if he didn't give up to you like a funky traveller to a highwayman. I remember a tale of a clumsy Turpin, who shot himself when he was drawing the pistol out of his holsters to frighten the money-bag out of a market farmer. You 've done about the same, you Richmond; and, of all the damned poor speeches I ever heard from a convicted felon, yours is the worst—a sheared sheep 'd ha' done it more respectably, grant the beast a tongue! The lady is free of you, I tell you. Harry has to thank you for that kindness. She—what is it, Janet? Never

mind, I 've got the story—she didn't want to marry ; but this prince, who called on me just now, happened to be her father's nominee, and he heard of your scoundrelism, and he behaved like a man and a gentleman, and offered himself, none too early nor too late, as it turns out ; and the princess, like a good girl, has made amends to her father by accepting him. I 've the word of this Prince Hermann for it. Now you can look upon a game of stale-mate. If I had gone to the prince, it wouldn't have been to back your play ; but, if you hadn't been guilty of the tricks of a blackguard past praying for, this princess would never have been obliged to marry a man to protect her father and herself. They sent him here to stop any misunderstanding. He speaks good English, so that 's certain. Your lies will be contradicted, every one of 'em, seriatim, in to-morrow's newspapers, setting the real man in place of the wrong one ; and you 'll draw no profit from them in your fashionable world, where you 've been grinning lately, like a blackamoor's head on a conjuror's plate—the devil alone able to account for the body and joinings. Now you can be off.'

I went up to my father. His plight was more desperate than mine, for I had resembled the condemned before the firing-party, to whom the expected bullet brings a merely physical shock. He, poor man, heard his sentence, which is the heart's pang of death ; and how fondly and rootedly he had clung to the idea of my marriage with the princess was shown in his extinction after this blow.

My grandfather chose the moment as a fitting one to ask me for the last time to take my side.

I replied, without offence in the tones of my voice, that I thought my father need not lose me into the bargain, after what he had suffered that day.

He just as quietly rejoined with a recommendation to me to divorce myself for good and all from a scoundrel.

I took my father's arm : he was not in a state to move away unsupported.

My aunt Dorothy stood weeping ; Janet was at the window, no friend to either of us.

I said to her, ' You have your wish.'

She shook her head, but did not look back.

My grandfather watched me, step by step, until I had reached the door.

' You 're going, are you ? ' he said. ' Then I whistle you off my fingers ! '

An attempt to speak was made by my father in the doorway. He bowed wide of the company, like a blind man. I led him out.

Dimness of sight spared me from seeing certain figures, which were at the toll-bar of the pier, on the way to quit our shores. What I heard was not of a character to give me faith in the sanity of the companion I had chosen. He murmured it at first to himself :

' Waddy shall have her monument ! '

My patience was not proof against the repetition of it aloud to me. Had I been gentler I might have known that his nature was compelled to look forward to something, and he discerned nothing in the future, save the task of raising a memorial to a faithful servant.

CHAPTER LIII

THE HEIRESS PROVES THAT SHE INHERITS THE FEUD AND I GO DRIFTING

My grandfather lived eight months after a scene that had afforded him high gratification at the heaviest cost a plain man can pay for his pleasures : it killed him.

My father's supple nature helped him to survive it in apparently unimpeded health, so that the world might well suppose him unconquerable, as he meant that it should. But I, who was with him, knew, though he never talked of his wounds, they had been driven into his heart. He collapsed in speech, and became what he used to call 'one of the ordinary nodding men,' forsaken of his swamping initiative. I merely observed him; I did not invite his confidences, being myself in no mood to give sympathy or to receive it. I was about as tender in my care of him as a military escort bound to deliver up a captive alive.

I left him at Bulsted on my way to London to face the creditors. Adversity had not lowered the admiration of the captain and his wife for the magnificent host of those select and lofty entertainments which I was led by my errand to examine in the skeleton, and with a wonder as big as theirs, but of another complexion. They hung about him, and perused and petted him quaintly; it was grotesque; they thought him deeply injured: by what, by whom, they could not say; but Julia was disappointed in me for refraining to come out with a sally on his behalf. He had quite intoxicated their imaginations. Julia told me of the things he did not do as marvellingly as of the things he did or had done; the charm, it seemed, was to find herself familiar with him to the extent of all but nursing him and making him belong to her. Pilgrims coming upon the source of the mysteriously-abounding river, hardly revere it the less because they love it more when they behold the babbling channels it issues from; and the sense of possession is the secret, I suppose. Julia could inform me rapturously that her charge had slept eighteen hours at a spell. His remarks upon the proposal to fetch a doctor, feeble in themselves, were delicious to her, because they recalled his old humour

to show his great spirit, and from her and from Captain William in turn I was condemned to hear how he had said this and that of the doctor, which in my opinion might have been more concise. 'Really, deuced good indeed!' Captain William would exclaim. 'Don't you see it, Harry, my boy? He denies the doctor has a right to cast him out of the world on account of his having been the official to introduce him, and he 'll only consent to be visited when he happens to be as incapable of resisting as upon their very first encounter.'

The doctor and death and marriage, I ventured to remind the captain, had been riddled in this fashion by the whole army of humourists and their echoes.

He and Julia fancied me cold to my father's merits. Fond as they were of the squire, they declared war against him in private, they criticized Janet, they thought my aunt Dorothy slightly wrong in making a secret of her good deed: my father was the victim. Their unabated warmth consoled me in the bitterest of seasons. He found a home with them at a time when there would have been a battle at every step. The world soon knew that my grandfather had cast me off, and with this foundation destroyed, the entire fabric of the Grand Parade fell to the ground at once. The crash was heavy. Jorian DeWitt said truly that what a man hates in adversity is to see 'faces'; meaning that the humanity has gone out of them in their curious observation of you under misfortune. You see neither friends nor enemies. You are too sensitive for friends, and are blunted against enemies. You see but the mask of faces: my father was sheltered from that. Julia consulted his wishes in everything; she set traps to catch his whims, and treated them as birds of paradise; she could submit to have the toppling crumpled figure of a man, Bagenhope, his pensioner and singular comforter, in her house. The little

creature was fetched out of his haunts in London purposely to soothe my father with performances on his ancient clarionet, a most querulous plaintive instrument in his discoursing, almost the length of himself ; and she endured the nightly sound of it in the guest's blue bedroom, heroically patient, a model to me. Bagenhope drank drams : she allowanced him. He had known my father's mother, and could talk of her in his cups : his playing, and his aged tunes, my father said, were a certification to him that he was at the bottom of the ladder. Why that should afford him peculiar comfort, none of us could comprehend. 'He was the humble lover of my mother, Richie,' I heard with some confusion, and that he adored her memory. The statement was part of an entreaty to me to provide liberally for Bagenhope's pension before we quitted England. 'I am not seriously anxious for much else,' said my father. Yet was he fully conscious of the defeat he had sustained and the catastrophe he had brought down upon me : his touch of my hand told me that, and his desire for darkness and sleep. He had nothing to look to, nothing to see twinkling its radiance for him in the dim distance now ; no propitiating Government, no special Providence. But he never once put on a sorrowful air to press for pathos, and I thanked him. He was a man endowed to excite it in the most effective manner, to a degree fearful enough to win English sympathies despite his un-English faults. He could have drawn tears in floods, infinite pathetic commiseration, from our grangousier public, whose taste is to have it as it may be had to the mixture of one-third of nature in two-thirds of artifice. I believe he was expected to go about with this beggar's petition for compassion, and it was a disappointment to the generous, for which they punished him, that he should have abstained. And moreover his simple quietude was

really touching to true-hearted people. The elements of pathos do not permit of their being dispensed from a stout smoking bowl. I have to record no pathetic field-day. My father was never insincere in emotion.

I spared his friends, chums, associates, excellent men of a kind, the trial of their attachment by shunning them. His servants I dismissed personally, from M. Alphonse down to the coachman Jeremy, whose speech to me was, that he should be happy to serve my father again, or me, if he should happen to be out of a situation when either of us wanted him, which at least showed his preference for employment : on the other hand, Alphonse, embracing the grand extremes of his stereotyped national oratory, where 'SI JAMAIS,' like the herald Mercury new-mounting, takes its august flight to set in the splendour of 'JUSQU'À LA MORT,' declared all other service than my father's repugnant, and vowed himself to a hermitage, remote from condiments. They both meant well, and did but speak the diverse language of their blood. Mrs. Waddy withdrew a respited heart to Dipwell ; it being, according to her experiences, the third time that my father had relinquished house and furniture to go into eclipse on the Continent after blazing over London. She strongly recommended the Continent for a place of restoration, citing his likeness to that animal the chameleon, in the readiness with which he forgot himself among them that knew nothing of him. We quitted Bulsted previous to the return of the family to Riversley. My grandfather lay at the island hotel a month, and was brought home desperately ill. Lady Edbury happened to cross the channel with us. She behaved badly, I thought ; foolishly, my father said. She did as much as obliqueness of vision and sharpness of feature could help her to do to cut him in the presence of her party : and he would not take nay. It seemed in very bad taste on his part ; he

explained to me off-handedly that he insisted upon the exchange of a word or two for the single purpose of protecting her from calumny. By and by it grew more explicable to me how witless she had been to give gossip a handle in the effort to escape it. She sent for him in Paris, but he did not pay the visit.

My grandfather and I never saw one another again. He had news of me from various quarters, and I of him from one ; I was leading a life in marked contrast from the homely Riversley circle of days : and this likewise was set in the count of charges against my father. Our Continental pilgrimage ended in a course of riotousness that he did not participate in, and was entirely innocent of, but was held accountable for, because he had been judged a sinner.

'I am ordered to say,' Janet wrote, scrupulously obeying the order, 'that if you will leave Paris and come home, and not delay in doing it, your grandfather will receive you on the same footing as heretofore.'

As heretofore! in a letter from a young woman supposed to nourish a softness !

I could not leave my father in Paris, alone ; I dared not bring him to London. In wrath at what I remembered, I replied that I was willing to return to Riversley if my father should find a welcome as well.

Janet sent a few dry lines to summon me over in April, a pleasant month on heath-lands when the South-west sweeps them. The squire was dead. I dropped my father at Bulsted. I could have sworn to the terms of the Will ; Mr. Burgin had little to teach me. Janet was the heiress ; three thousand pounds per annum fell to the lot of Harry Lepel Richmond, to be paid out of the estate, and pass in reversion to his children, or to Janet's should the aforesaid Harry die childless.

I was hard hit, and chagrined, but I was not at all

angry, for I knew what the Will meant. My aunt Dorothy supplied the interlining eagerly to mollify the seeming cruelty. 'You have only to ask to have it all, Harry.' The sturdy squire had done his utmost to forward his cherished wishes after death. My aunt received five-and-twenty thousand pounds, the sum she had thrown away. 'I promised that no money of mine should go where the other went,' she said.

The surprise in store for me was to find how much this rough-worded old man had been liked by his tenantry, his agents and servants. I spoke of it to Janet. 'They loved him,' she said. 'No one who ever met him fairly could help loving him.' They followed him to his grave in a body. From what I chanced to hear among them, their squire was the man of their hearts: in short, an Englishman of the kind which is perpetually perishing out of the land. Janet expected me to be enthusiastic likewise, or remorseful. She expected sympathy; she read me the long list of his charities. I was reminded of Julia Bulsted commenting on my father, with her this he did and that. 'He had plenty,' I said, and Janet shut her lips. Her coldness was irritating.

What ground of accusation had she against me? Our situation had become so delicate that a cold breath sundered us as far as the Poles. I was at liberty to suspect that now she was the heiress, her mind was simply obedient to her grandada's wish; but, as I told my aunt Dorothy, I would not do her that injustice.

'No,' said Dorothy; 'it is the money that makes *her* position so difficult, unless you break the ice.'

I urged that having steadily refused her before, I could hardly advance without some invitation now.

'What invitation?' said my aunt.

'Not a corpse-like consent,' said I.

'Harry,' she twitted me, 'you have not forgiven her.'

That was true.

Sir Roderick and Lady Ilchester did not conceal their elation at their daughter's vast inheritance, though the lady appealed to my feelings in stating that her son Charles was not mentioned in the Will. Sir Roderick talked of the squire with personal pride :—'Now, as to his management of those unwieldy men, his miners : they sent him up the items of their complaints. He took them one by one, yielding here, discussing there, and holding to his point. So the men gave way ; he sent them a month's pay to reward them for their good sense. He had the art of moulding the men who served him in his own likeness. His capacity for business was extraordinary ; you never expected it of a country gentleman. He more than quadrupled his inheritance—much more ! ' I state it to the worthy Baronet's honour, that although it would have been immensely to his satisfaction to see his daughter attracting the suitor proper to an heiress of such magnitude, he did not attempt to impose restriction upon my interviews with Janet : Riversley was mentioned as my home. I tried to feel at home ; the heir of the place seemed foreign, and so did Janet. I attributed it partly to her deep mourning dress that robed her in so sedate a womanliness, partly, in spite of myself, to her wealth.

'Speak to her kindly of your grandfather,' said my aunt Dorothy. To do so, however, as she desired it, would be to be guilty of a form of hypocrisy, and I belied my better sentiments by keeping silent. Thus, having ruined myself through anger, I allowed silly sensitiveness to prevent the repair.

It became known that my father was at Bulsted.

I saw trouble one morning on Janet's forehead.

We had a conversation that came near to tenderness ;

at last she said: 'Will you be able to forgive me if I have ever the misfortune to offend you?'

'You won't offend me,' said I.

She hoped not.

I rallied her: 'Tut, tut, you talk like any twelve-years-old, Janet.'

'I offended you then!'

'Every day! it 's all that I care much to remember.'

She looked pleased, but I was so situated that I required passion and abandonment in return for a confession damaging to my pride. Besides, the school I had been graduating in of late unfitted me for a young English gentlewoman's shades and intervolved descents of emotion. A glance up and a dimple in the cheek, were pretty homely things enough, not the blaze I wanted to unlock me, and absolutely thought I had deserved.

Sir Roderick called her to the library on business, which he was in the habit of doing ten times a day, as well as of discussing matters of business at table, ostentatiously consulting his daughter, with a solemn countenance and a transparently reeling heart of parental exultation. 'Janet is supreme,' he would say: 'my advice is simple advice; I am her chief agent, that is all.' Her chief agent, as director of three Companies and chairman of one, was perhaps competent to advise her, he remarked. Her judgement upon ordinary matters he agreed with my grandfather in thinking consummate.

Janet went to him, and shortly after drove him to the station for London. My aunt Dorothy had warned me that she was preparing some deed in my favour, and as I fancied her father to have gone to London for that purpose, and supposed she would now venture to touch on it, I walked away from the East gates of the park as soon as I heard the trot of her ponies, and was led by an evil fate (the stuff the fates are composed of in my instance I have

not kept secret) to walk Westward. Thither my evil fate propelled me, where accident was ready to espouse it and breed me mortifications innumerable. My father chanced to have heard the particulars of Squire Beltham's will that morning: I believe Captain William's coachman brushed the subject despondently in my interests; it did not reach him through Julia.

He stood outside the Western gates, and as I approached, I could perceive a labour of excitement on his frame. He pulled violently at the bars of the obstruction.

'Richie, I am interdicted house and grounds!' he called, and waved his hand toward the lodge: 'they decline to open to me.'

'Were you denied admission?' I asked him.

'—Your name, if you please, sir?—Mr. Richmond Roy.—We are sorry we have orders not to admit you. And they declined; they would not admit me to see my son.'

'Those must be the squire's old orders,' I said, and shouted to the lodge-keeper.

My father, with the forethoughtfulness which never forsook him, stopped me.

'No, Richie, no; the good woman shall not have the responsibility of letting me in against orders; she may be risking her place, poor soul! Help me, dear lad.'

He climbed the bars to the spikes, tottering, and communicating a convulsion to me as I assisted him in the leap down: no common feat for one of his age and weight.

He leaned on me, quaking.

'Impossible! Richie, impossible!' he cried, and reviewed a series of interjections.

It was some time before I discovered that they related to the Will. He was frenzied, and raved, turning suddenly

from red to pale under what I feared were redoubtable symptoms, physical or mental. He came for sight of the Will; he would contest it, overthrow it. Harry ruined? He would see Miss Beltham and fathom the plot;—angel, he called her, and was absurdly exclamatory, but in dire earnest. He must have had the appearance of a drunken man to persons observing him from the Grange windows.

My father was refused admission at the hall-doors.

The butler, the brute Sillabin, withstood me impassively.

Whose orders had he?

Miss Ilchester's.

'They are afraid of me!' my father thundered.

I sent a message to Janet.

She was not long in coming, followed by a footman who handed a twist of note-paper from my aunt Dorothy to my father. He opened it and made believe to read it, muttering all the while of the Will.

Janet dismissed the men-servants. She was quite colourless.

'We have been stopped in the doorway,' I said.

She answered: 'I wish it could have been prevented.'

'You take it on yourself, then?'

She was inaudible.

'My dear Janet, you call Riversley my home, don't you?'

'It is yours.'

'Do you intend to keep up this hateful feud now my grandfather is dead?'

'No, Harry, not I.'

'Did you give orders to stop my father from entering the house and grounds?'

'I did.'

'You won't have him here?'

'Dear Harry, I hoped he would not come just yet.'

'But you gave the orders?'

'Yes.'

'You 're rather incomprehensible, my dear Janet.'

'I wish you could understand me, Harry.'

'You arm your servants against him!'

'In a few days——' she faltered.

'You insult him and me *now*,' said I, enraged at the half indication of her relenting, which spoiled her look of modestly-resolute beauty, and seemed to show that she meant to succumb without letting me break her. 'You are mistress of the place.'

'I am. I wish I were not.'

'You are mistress of Riversley, and you refuse to let my father come in!'

'While I am the mistress, yes.'

'Why?'

'Anywhere but here, Harry! If he will see me or aunty, if he will kindly appoint any other place, we will meet him, we shall be glad.'

'I request you to let him enter the house. Do you consent or not?'

'No.'

'He was refused once at these doors. Do you refuse him a second time?'

'I do.'

'You mean that?'

'I am obliged to.'

'You won't yield a step to me?'

'I cannot.'

The spirit of an armed champion was behind those mild features, soft almost to supplication to me, that I might know her to be under a constraint. The nether lip dropped in breathing, the eyes wavered: such was her appearance in open war with me, but her will was firm.

Of course I was not so dense as to be unable to perceive her grounds for refusing.

She would not throw the burden on her grandada, even to propitiate me—the man she still loved.

But that she should have a reason, and think it good, in spite of me, and cling to it, defying me, and that she should do hurt to a sentient human creature, who was my father, for the sake of blindly obeying to the letter the injunction of the dead, were intolerable offences to me and common humanity. I, for my own part, would have forgiven her, as I congratulated myself upon reflecting. It was on her account—to open her mind, to enlighten her concerning right and wrong determination, to bring her feelings to bear upon a crude judgement—that I condescended to argue the case. Smarting with admiration, both of the depths and shallows of her character, and of her fine figure, I began :—She was to consider how young she was to pretend to decide on the balance of duties, how little of the world she had seen ; an oath sworn at the bedside of the dead was a solemn thing, but was it Christian to keep it to do an unnecessary cruelty to the living ? if she had not studied philosophy, she might at least discern the difference between just resolves and insane—between those the soul sanctioned, and those hateful to nature ; to bind oneself to carry on another person's vindictiveness was voluntarily to adopt slavery ; this was flatly-avowed insanity, and so forth, with an emphatic display of patience.

The truth of my words could not be controverted. Unhappily I confounded right speaking with right acting, and conceived, because I spoke so justly, that I was specially approved in pressing her to yield.

She broke the first pause to say, ' It 's useless, Harry. I do what I think I am bound to do.'

' Then I have spoken to no purpose ! '

'If you will only be kind, and wait two or three days?'

'Be sensible!'

'I am, as much as I can be.'

'Hard as a flint—you always were! The most grateful woman alive, I admit. I know not another, I assure you, Janet, who, in return for millions of money, would do such a piece of wanton cruelty. What! You think he was not punished enough when he was berated and torn to shreds in your presence? They would be cruel, perhaps—we will suppose it of your sex—but not so fond of their consciences as to stamp a life out to keep an oath. I forget the terms of the Will. Were you enjoined in it to force him away?'

My father had stationed himself in the background. Mention of the Will caught his ears, and he commenced shaking my aunt Dorothy's note, blinking and muttering at a great rate, and pressing his temples.

'I do not read a word of this,' he said,—'upon my honour, not a word; and I know it is her handwriting. That Will!—only, for the love of heaven, madam,'—he bowed vaguely to Janet—'not a syllable of this to the princess, or we are destroyed. I have a great bell in my head, or I would say more. Hearing is out of the question.'

Janet gazed piteously from him to me.

To kill the deer and be sorry for the suffering wretch is common.

I begged my father to walk along the carriage-drive. He required that the direction should be pointed out accurately, and promptly obeyed me, saying: 'I back you, remember. I should certainly be asleep now but for this extraordinary bell.' After going some steps, he turned to shout 'Gong,' and touched his ear. He walked loosely, utterly unlike the walk habitual to him even recently in Paris.

'Has he been ill?' Janet asked.

'He won't see the doctor; the symptoms threaten apoplexy or paralysis, I 'm told. Let us finish. You were aware that you were to inherit Riversley?'

'Yes, Riversley, Harry; I knew that; I knew nothing else.'

'The old place was left to you that you might bar my father out?'

'I gave my word.'

'You pledged it—swore?'

'No.'

'Well, you 've done your worst, my dear. If the axe were to fall on your neck for it, you would still refuse, would you not?'

Janet answered softly: 'I believe so.'

'Then, good-bye,' said I.

That feminine softness and its burden of unalterable firmness pulled me two ways, angering me all the more that I should feel myself susceptible to a charm which came of spiritual rawness rather than sweetness; for she needed not to have made the answer in such a manner; there was pride in it; she liked the soft sound of her voice while declaring herself invincible: I could see her picturing herself meek but fixed.

'Will you go, Harry? Will you not take Riversley?' she said.

I laughed.

'To spare you the repetition of the dilemma?'

'No, Harry; but this might be done.'

'But—my fullest thanks to you for your generosity: really! I speak in earnest:—it would be decidedly against your grandada's wishes, seeing that he left the Grange to you, and not to me.'

'Grandada's wishes! I cannot carry out all his wishes,' she sighed.

'Are you anxious to?'

We were on the delicate ground, as her crimson face revealed to me that she knew as well as I.

I, however, had little delicacy in leading her on it. She might well feel that she deserved some wooing.

I fancied she was going to be overcome, going to tremble and show herself ready to fall on my bosom, and I was uncertain of the amount of magnanimity in store there.

She replied calmly, 'Not immediately.'

'You are not immediately anxious to fulfil his wishes?'

'Harry, I find it hard to do those that are thrust on me.'

'But, as a matter of serious obligation, you would hold yourself bound by and by to perform them all?'

'I cannot speak any further of my willingness, Harry.'

'The sense of duty is evidently always sufficient to make you act upon the negative—to deny, at least?'

'Yes, I daresay,' said Janet.

We shook hands like a pair of commercial men.

I led my father to Bulsted. He was too feverish to remain there. In the evening, after having had a fruitless conversation with my aunt Dorothy upon the event of the day, I took him to London that he might visit his lawyers, who kindly consented to treat him like doctors, when I had arranged to make over to them three parts of my annuity, and talked of his Case encouragingly; the effect of which should not have astonished me. He closed a fit of reverie resembling his drowsiness, by exclaiming: 'Richie will be indebted to his dad for his place in the world after all!' Temporarily, he admitted, we must be fugitives from creditors, and as to that eccentric tribe, at once so human and so inhuman, he imparted many curious characteristics gained of his experience. Jorian DeWitt had indeed compared them to the female

ivy that would ultimately kill its tree, but inasmuch as they were parasites, they loved their debtor ; he was life and support to them, and there was this remarkable fact about them : by slipping out of their clutches at critical moments when they would infallibly be pulling you down, you were enabled to return to them fresh, and they became inspired with another lease of lively faith in your future : et cætera. I knew the language. It was a flash of himself, and a bad one, but I was not the person whom he meant to deceive with it. He was soon giving me other than verbal proof out of England that he was not thoroughly beaten. We had no home in England. At an hotel in Vienna, upon the close of the aristocratic season there, he renewed an acquaintance with a Russian lady, Countess Kornikoff, and he and I parted. She disliked the Margravine of Rippau, who was in Vienna, and did not recognize us. I heard that it was the Margravine who had despatched Prince Hermann to England as soon as she discovered Ottilia's flight thither. She commissioned him to go straightway to Roy in London, and my father's having infatuatedly left his own address for Prince Ernest's in the island, brought Hermann down : he only met Eckart in the morning train. I mention it to show the strange working of events.

Janet sent me a letter by the hands of Temple in August. It was moderately well written for so blunt a writer, and might have touched me but for other news coming simultaneously that shook the earth under my feet.

She begged my forgiveness for her hardness, adding characteristically that she could never have acted in any other manner. The delusion, that what she was she must always be, because it was her nature, had mastered her understanding, or rather it was one of the doors of her understanding not yet opened : she had to respect her grandada's wishes. She made it likewise

appear that she was ready for further sacrifices to carry out the same.

'At least you will accept a division of the property, Harry. It should be yours. It is an excess, and I feel it a snare to me. I was a selfish child: I may not become an estimable woman. You have not pardoned my behaviour at the island last year, and I cannot think I was wrong: perhaps I might learn. I want your friendship and counsel. Aunty will live with me: she says that you would complete us. At any rate I transfer Riversley to you. Send me your consent. Papa *will* have it before the transfer is signed.'

The letter ended with an adieu, a petition for an answer, and 'yours affectionately.'

On the day of its date, a Viennese newspaper lying on the Salzburg Hotel table chronicled Ottilia's marriage with Prince Hermann.

I turned on Temple to walk him off his legs if I could. Carry your fever to the Alps, you of minds diseased: not to sit down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort will trick the soul and set you measuring our lean humanity against yonder sublime and infinite; but mount, rack the limbs, wrestle it out among the peaks; taste danger, sweat, earn rest: learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost reward. Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all your hopes at hand?—hang upon the crags at a gradient that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. There the merry little hopes grow for the climber like flowers and food, immediate, prompt to prove their uses, sufficient if just within the grasp, as mortal hopes should be. How the old lax life closes in about you there! You are the man of your faculties, nothing more. Why should a

man pretend to more? We ask it wonderingly when we are healthy. Poetic rhapsodists in the vales below may tell you of the joy and grandeur of the upper regions, they cannot pluck you the medical herb. He gets that for himself who wanders the marshy ledge at nightfall to behold the distant Sennhüttchen twinkle, who leaps the green-eyed crevasses, and in the solitude of an emerald alp stretches a salt hand to the mountain kine.

CHAPTER LIV

MY RETURN TO ENGLAND

I PASSED from the Alps to the desert, and fell in love with the East, until it began to consume me. History, like the air we breathe, must be in motion to keep us uncorrupt: otherwise its ancient homes are infectious. My passion for the sun and his baked people lasted awhile, the drudgery of the habit of voluntary exile some time longer, and then, quite unawares, I was seized with a thirst for England, so violent that I abandoned a correspondence of several months, lying for me both at Damascus and Cairo, to catch the boat for Europe. A dream of a rainy morning, in the midst of the glowing furnace, may have been the origin of the wild craving I had for my native land and Janet. The moist air of flying showers and drenched spring buds surrounded her; I saw her plainly lifting a rose's head; was it possible I had ever refused to be her yokefellow? Could so noble a figure of a fair young woman have been offered and repudiated again and again by a man in his senses? I spurned the intolerable idiot, to stop reflection. Perhaps she did likewise now. There was nothing to alarm

me save my own eagerness. The news of my father was perplexing, leading me to suppose him re-established in London, awaiting the coming on of his Case. Whence the money ?

Money and my father, I knew, met as they divided, fortuitously ; in illustration of which, I well remembered, while passing in view of the Key of the Adige along the Lombard plain, a circumstance during my Alpine tour with Temple, of more importance to him than to me, when my emulous friend, who would never be beaten, sprained his ankle severely on the crags of a waterfall, not far from Innsbruck, and was invited into a house by a young English lady, daughter of a retired Colonel of Engineers of our army. The colonel was an exile from his country for no grave crime : but, as he told us, as much an exile as if he had committed a capital offence in being the father of nine healthy girls. He had been, against his judgement, he averred, persuaded to fix on his Tyrolese spot of ground by the two elder ones. Five were now married to foreigners ; thus they repaid him, by scattering good English blood on the race of Counts and Freiherrs ! 'I could understand the decrees of Providence before I was a parent,' said this dear old Colonel Heddon. 'I was looking up at the rainbow when I heard your steps, asking myself whether it was seen in England at that instant, and why on earth I should be out of England ! ' He lived abroad to be able to dower his girls. His sons-in-law were gentlemen ; so far he was condemned to be satisfied, but supposing all his girls married foreigners ? His primitive frankness charmed us, and it struck me that my susceptible Temple would have liked to be in a position to reassure him with regard to the Lucy of the four. We were obliged to confess that she was catching a foreign accent. The old colonel groaned. He begged us to forgive him

for not treating us as strangers; his heart leapt out to young English gentlemen.

My name, he said, reminded him of a great character at home, in the old days: a certain Roy-Richmond, son of an actress and somebody, so the story went: and there was an old Lord Edbury who knew more about it than most. 'Now Roy was an adventurer, but he had a soul of true chivalry, by gad, he had! Plenty of foreign whiffmajigs are to be found, but you won't come upon a fellow like that. Where he got his money from none knew: all I can say is, I don't believe he ever did a dirty action for it. And one matter I 'll tell you of:—pardon me a moment, Mr. Richmond, I haven't talked English for half a century, or, at least, a quarter. Old Lord Edbury put him down in his will for some thousands, and he risked it to save a lady, who hated him for his pains. Lady Edbury was of the Bolton blood, none of the tamest; they breed good cavalry men. She ran away from her husband once. The old lord took her back. "It 's at your peril, mind!" says she. Well, Roy hears by-and-by of a fresh affair. He mounted horse; he was in the saddle, I 've been assured, a night and a day, and posted himself between my lady's park-gates, and the house, at dusk. The rumour ran that he knew of the marquis playing spy on his wife. However, such was the fact; she was going off again, and the marquis did play the mean part. She walked down the park-road, and, seeing the cloaked figure of a man, she imagined him to be her Lothario, and very naturally, you will own, fell into his arms. The gentleman in question was an acquaintance of mine; and the less you follow our example the better for you. It was a damnable period in morals! He told me that he saw the scene from the gates, where he had his carriage-and-four ready. The old lord burst out of an ambush on his wife and her

supposed paramour; the lady was imprisoned in her rescuer's arms, and my friend retired on tiptoe, which was, I incline to think, the best thing he could do. Our morals were abominable. Lady Edbury would never see Roy-Richmond after that, nor the old lord neither. He doubled the sum he had intended to leave him, though. I heard that he married a second young wife. Roy, I believe, ended by marrying a great heiress, and reforming. He was an eloquent fellow, and stood like a general in full uniform, cocked hat and feathers; most amusing fellow at table; beat a Frenchman for anecdote.'

I spared Colonel Heddon the revelation of my relationship to his hero, thanking his garrulity for interrupting me.

How I pitied him when I drove past the gates of the main route to Innsbruck! For I was bound homeward: I should soon see England, green cloudy England, the white cliffs, the meadows, the heaths! And I thanked the colonel again in my heart for having done something to reconcile me to the idea of that strange father of mine.

A banner-like stream of morning-coloured smoke rolled North-eastward as I entered London, and I drove to Temple's chambers. He was in Court, engaged in a case as junior to his father. Temple had become that radiant human creature, a working man, then? I walked slowly to the Court, and saw him there, hardly recognising him in his wig. All that he had to do was to prompt his father in a case of collision at sea; the barque Priscilla had run foul of a merchant brig, near the mouth of the Thames, and though I did not expect it on hearing the vessel's name, it proved to be no other than the barque Priscilla of Captain Jasper Welsh. Soon after I had shaken Temple's hand, I was going through the same ceremony with the captain himself, not at all

changed in appearance, who blessed his heart for seeing me, cried out that a beard and mustachios made a foreign face of a young Englishman, and was full of the 'providential' circumstance of his having confided his case to Temple and his father.

'Ay, ay, Captain Welsh,' said Temple, 'we have pulled you through, only another time mind you keep an eye on that look-out man of yours. Some of your men, I suspect, see double with an easy conscience. A close net makes slippery eels.'

'Have you anything to say against my men?' the captain inquired.

Temple replied that he would talk to him about it presently, and laughed as he drew me away.

'His men will get him into a deuce of a scrape some day, Richie. I shall put him on his guard. Have you had all my letters? You look made of iron. I'm beginning capitally, not afraid of the Court a bit, and I hope I'm not pert. I wish your father had taken it better!'

'Taken what?' said I.

'Haven't you heard from him?'

'Two or three times: a mass of interjections.'

'You know he brought his Case forward at last? Of course it went as we all knew it would.'

'Where is he? Have you seen Janet lately?'

'He is at Miss Ilchester's house in London.'

'Write the address on a card.'

Temple wrote it rather hesitatingly, I thought.

We talked of seeing one another in the evening, and I sprang off to Janet's residence, forgetting to grasp my old friend's hand at parting. I was madly anxious to thank her for the unexpected tenderness to my father. And now nothing stood between us!

My aunt Dorothy was the first to welcome me. 'He

"One hand she was obliged to surrender I kissed it"
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must be prepared for the sight of you, Harry. The doctors say that a shock may destroy him. Janet treats him so wonderfully.'

I pressed her on my heart and cheered her, praising Janet. She wept.

'Is there anything new the matter?' I said.

'It 's not new to us, Harry. I 'm sure you 're brave?'

'Brave! what am I asked to bear?'

'Much, if you love her, Harry!'

'Speak.'

'It is better you should hear it from me, Harry. I wrote you word of it. We all imagined it would not be disagreeable to you. Who could foresee this change in you? She least of all!'

'She 's in love with some one?'

'I did not say in love.'

'Tell me the worst.'

'She is engaged to be married.'

Janet came into the room—another Janet for me. She had engaged herself to marry the Marquis of Edbury. At the moment when she enslaved me with gratitude and admiration she was lost to me. I knew her too well to see a chance of her breaking her pledged word.

My old grandfather said of Janet, 'She 's a compassionate thing.' I felt *now* the tears under his speech, and how late I was in getting wisdom. Compassion for Edbury in Janet's bosom was the matchmaker's chief engine of assault, my aunt Dorothy told me. Lady Ilchester had been for this suitor, Sir Roderick for the other, up to the verge of a quarrel between the most united of wedding couples. Janet was persecuted. She heard that Edbury's life was running to waste; she liked him for his cricketing and hunting, his frankness, seeming manliness, and general native English enthusiasm. I

permitted myself to comprehend the case as far as I could allow myself to excuse her.

Dorothy Beltham told me something of Janet that struck me to the dust.

'It is this, dear Harry; bear to hear it! Janet and I and his good true woman of a housekeeper, whose name is Waddy, we are, I believe, the only persons that know it. He had a large company to dine at a City tavern, she told us, on the night after the decision—when the verdict went against him. The following morning I received a note from this good Mrs. Waddy addressed to Sir Roderick's London house, where I was staying with Janet; it said that he was ill; and Janet put on her bonnet at once to go to him.'

'The lady didn't fear contagion any longer?'

'She went, walking fast. He was living in lodgings, and the people of the house insisted on removing him, Mrs. Waddy told us. She was cowering in the parlour. I had not the courage to go upstairs. Janet went by herself.'

My heart rose on a huge swell.

'She was alone with him, Harry. We could hear them.'

Dorothy Beltham looked imploringly on me to waken my whole comprehension.

'She subdued him. When I saw him he was white as death, but quiet, not dangerous at all.'

'Do you mean she found him raving?' I cried out on our Maker's name, in grief and horror.

'Yes, dear Harry, it was so.'

'She stepped between him and an asylum?'

'She quitted Sir Roderick's house to lodge your father safe in one that she hired, and have him under her own care. She watched him day and night for three weeks, and governed him, assisted only at intervals by the poor

frightened woman, Mrs. Waddy, and just as frightened me. And I am still subject to the poor woman's way of pressing her hand to her heart at a noise. It 's over now. Harry, Janet wished that you should never hear of it. She dreads any excitement for him. I think she is right in fancying her own influence the best: he is used to it. You know how gentle she is though she is so firm.'

'Oh! don't torture me, ma'am, for God's sake,' I called aloud.

CHAPTER LV

I MEET MY FIRST PLAYFELLOW AND TAKE MY PUNISHMENT

THERE came to me a little note on foreign paper, unaddressed, an enclosure forwarded by Janet, and containing merely one scrap from the playful XENIEN of Ottilia's favourite brotherly poets, of untranslatable flavour :—

> Who shuns true friends flies fortune in the concrete:
> Would he see what he aims at? let him ask his heels.

It filled me with a breath of old German peace.

From this I learnt that Ottilia and Janet corresponded. Upon what topics? to what degree of intimacy?

Janet now confessed to me that their intimacy had never known reserve. The princess had divined her attachment for Harry Richmond when their acquaintance was commenced in the island, and knew at the present moment that I had travelled round to the recognition of Janet's worth.

Thus encouraged by the princess's changeless friendship, I wrote to her, leaving little to be guessed of my

state of mind, withholding nothing of the circumstances surrounding me. Imagination dealt me all my sharpest misery, and now that Ottilia resumed her place there, I became infinitely peacefuller, and stronger to subdue my hungry nature. It caused me no pang, strangely though it read in my sight when written, to send warm greetings and respects to the prince her husband.

Is it any waste of time to write of love? The trials of life are in it, but in a narrow ring and a fierier. You may learn to know yourself through love, as you do after years of life, whether you are fit to lift them that are about you, or whether you are but a cheat, and a load on the backs of your fellows. The impure perishes, the inefficient languishes, the moderate comes to its autumn of decay—these are of the kinds which aim at satisfaction to die of it soon or late. The love that survives has strangled craving; it lives because it lives to nourish and succour like the heavens.

But to strangle craving is indeed to go through a death before you reach your immortality.

But again, to write of a love perverted by all the elements contributing to foolishness, and foredoomed to chastisement, would be a graceless business. Janet and I went through our trial, she, you may believe, the braver under the most to bear.

I was taken by Temple down to the ship-smelling East of London, for the double purpose of trying to convince Captain Welsh of the extravagance of a piece of chivalry he was about to commit, and of seeing a lady with a history, who had recently come under his guardianship. Temple thought I should know her, but he made a mystery of it until the moment of our introduction arrived, not being certain of her identity, and not wishing to have me disappointed. It appeared that Captain Welsh questioned his men closely after he had won his case,

and he arrived at the conclusion that two or three of them had been guilty of false swearing in his interests. He did not dismiss them, for, as he said, it was twice a bad thing to turn sinners loose : it was to shove them out of the direct road of amendment, and it was a wrong to the population. He insisted, however, on paying the legal costs and an indemnity for the collision at sea; and Temple was in great distress about it, he having originally suggested the suspicion of his men to Captain Welsh. 'I wanted to put him on his guard against those rascals,' Temple said, 'and I suppose,' he sighed, 'I wanted the old captain to think me enormously clever all round.' He shook himself, and assumed a bearish aspect, significant of disgust and recklessness. 'The captain 'll be ruined, Richie ; and he 's not young, you know, to go on sailing his barque Priscilla for ever. If he pays, why, I ought to pay, and then you ought to pay, for I shouldn't have shown off before him alone, and then the wind that fetched you ought to pay. Toss common sense overboard, there 's no end to your fine-drawings ; that 's why it 's always safest to swear by the Judge.'

We rolled down to the masts among the chimneys on the top of an omnibus. The driver was eloquent on cricket-matches. Now, cricket, he said, was fine manly sport ; it might kill a man, but it never meant mischief : foreigners themselves had a bit of an idea that it was the best game in the world, though it was a nice joke to see a foreigner playing at it ! None of them could stand to be bowled at. Hadn't stomachs for it ; they 'd have to train for soldiers first. On one occasion he had seen a Frenchman looking on at a match. 'Ball was hit a shooter twixt the slips : off starts Frenchman, catches it, heaves it up, like his head, half-way to wicket, and all the field set to bawling at him, and sending him, we knew

where. He tripped off: "You no comprong politeness in dis country." Ha! ha!'

To prove the aforesaid Frenchman wrong, we nodded to the driver's laughter at his exquisite imitation.

He informed us that he had backed the Surrey Eleven last year, owing to the report of a gentleman-bowler, who had done things in the way of tumbling wickets to tickle the ears of cricketers. Gentlemen-batters were common: gentlemen-bowlers were quite another dish. Saddlebank was the gentleman's name.

'Old Nandrew Saddle?' Temple called to me, and we smiled at the supposition of Saddlebank's fame, neither of us, from what we had known of his bowling, doubting that he deserved it.

'Acquainted with him, gentlemen?' the driver inquired, touching his hat. 'Well, and I ask why don't more gentlemen take to cricket? 'stead of horses all round the year! Now, there 's my notion of happiness,' said the man condemned to inactivity, in the perpetual act of motion; 'cricket in cricket season! It comprises —count: lots o' running; and that 's good: just enough o' taking it easy; that 's good: a appetite for your dinner, and your ale or your Port, as may be the case; good, number three. Add on a tired pipe after dark, and a sound sleep to follow, and you say good morning to the doctor and the parson; for you 're in health body and soul, and ne'er a parson 'll make a better Christian of ye, that I 'll swear.'

As if anxious not to pervert us, he concluded: 'That 's what *I* think, gentlemen.'

Temple and I talked of the ancient raptures of a first of May cricketing-day on a sunny green meadow, with an ocean of a day before us, and well-braced spirits for the match. I had the vision of a matronly, but not much altered Janet, mounted on horseback, to witness the

performance of some favourite Eleven of youngsters with her connoisseur's eye ; and then the model of an English lady, wife, and mother, waving adieu to the field and cantering home to entertain her husband's guests. Her husband !

Temple was aware of my grief, but saw no remedy. I knew that in his heart he thought me justly punished, though he loved me.

We had a long sitting with Captain Welsh, whom I found immoveable, as I expected I should. His men, he said, had confessed their sin similarly to the crab in a hole, with one claw out, as the way of sinners was. He blamed himself mainly. 'Where you have accidents, Mr. Richmond, you have faults ; and where you have faults aboard a ship you may trace a line to the captain. I should have treated my ship's crew like my conscience, and *gone through them nightly*. As it is, sir, here comes round one of your accidents to tell me I have lived blinded by conceit. That is my affliction, my young friend. The payment of the money is no more so than to restore money held in trust.'

Temple and I argued the case with him, as of old on our voyage, on board the barque Priscilla, quite unavailingly.

'Is a verdict built on lies one that my Maker approves of ?' said he. 'If I keep possession of that money, my young friends, will it clothe me ? Ay, with stings ! Will it feed me ? Ay, with poison. And they that should be having it shiver and want !'

He was emphatic, as he would not have been, save to read us an example, owing to our contention with him. 'The money is Satan in my very hands !' When he had dismissed the subject he never returned to it.

His topic of extreme happiness, to which Temple led him, was the rescue of a beautiful sinner from a life of

shame. It appeared that Captain Welsh had the habit between his voyages of making one holiday expedition to the spot of all creation he thought the fairest, Richmond Hill, overlooking the Thames; and there, one evening, he espied a lady in grief, and spoke to her, and gave her consolation. More, he gave her a blameless home. The lady's name was Mabel Bolton. She was in distress of spirit rather than of circumstances, for temptation was thick about one so beautiful, to supply the vanities and luxuries of the father of sin. He described her.

"She was my first playfellow, the miller's daughter of Dipwell, Mabel Sweetwinter, taken from her home by Lord Edbury during my German university career, and now put away by him upon command of his family on the eve of his marriage.

She herself related her history to me, after telling me that she had seen me once at the steps of Edbury's Club. Our meeting was no great surprise to either of us. She had heard my name as that of an expected visitor; she had seen Temple, moreover, and he had prompted me with her Christian name and the praise of her really glorious hair, to anticipate the person who was ushered into the little cabin-like parlour by Captain Welsh's good old mother.

Of Edbury she could not speak for grief, believing that he loved her still and was acting under compulsion. Her long and faithful attachment to the scapegrace seemed to preserve her from the particular regrets Captain Welsh supposed to occupy her sinner's mind; so that, after some minutes of the hesitation and strangeness due to our common recollections, she talked of him simply and well—as befitted her situation, a worldling might say. But she did not conceal her relief in escaping to this quaint little refuge (she threw a kindly-comical look, not overtoned, at the miniature ships on the mantelpiece,

and the picture of Joseph leading Mary with her babe on the ass) from the temptations I could imagine a face like hers would expose her to. The face was splendid, the figure already overblown. I breathed some thanks to my father while she and I conversed apart. The miller was dead, her brother in America. She had no other safe home than the one Captain Welsh had opened to her. When I asked her (I had no excuse for it) whether she would consent to go to Edbury again, she reddened and burst into tears. I cursed my brutality. 'Let her cry,' said Captain Welsh on parting with us at his street door. 'Tears are the way of women and their comfort.'

To our astonishment he told us he intended to take her for a voyage in the Priscilla. 'Why?' we asked.

'I take her,' he said, 'because not to do things wholly is worse than not to do things at all, for it 's waste of time and cause for a chorus below, down in hell, my young friends. The woman is beautiful as Solomon's bride. She is weak as water. And the man is wicked. He has written to her a letter. He would have her reserved for himself, a wedded man: such he is, or is soon to be. I am searching, and she is not deceitful; and I am a poor man again and must go the voyage. I wrestled with her, and by grace I conquered her to come with me of a free will, and be out of his snares. Aboard I do not fear him, and she shall know the mercy of the Lord on high seas.'

We grimaced a little on her behalf, but had nothing to reply.

Seeing Janet after Mabel was strange. In the latter one could perceive the palpably suitable mate for Edbury. I felt that my darling was insulted—no amends for it! I had to keep silent and mark the remorseless preparations going forward. Not so Heriot. He had come over from the camp in Ireland on leave at this juncture. His

talk of women still suggested the hawk with the downy feathers of the last little plucked bird sticking to his beak; but his appreciation of Janet and some kindness for me made him a vehement opponent of her resolve. He took licence of his friendship to lay every incident before her, to complete his persuasions. She resisted his attacks, as I knew she would, obstinately, and replied to his entreaties with counter-supplications that he should urge me to accept old Riversley. The conflicts went on between those two daily, and I heard of them from Heriot at night. He refused to comprehend her determination under the head of anything save madness. Varied by reproaches of me for my former inveterate blindness, he raved upon Janet's madness incessantly, swearing that he would not be beaten. I told him his efforts were useless, but thought them friendly, and so they were, only Janet's resistance had fired his vanity, and he stalked up and down my room talking a mixture of egregious coxcombry and hearty good sense that might have shown one the cause he meant to win had become personal to him. Temple, who was sometimes in consultation with him, and was always amused by his quasi-fanfaronnade, assured me that Heriot was actually scheming. The next we heard of him was, that he had been seen at a whitebait hotel down the river drunk with Edbury. Janet also heard of that, and declined to see Heriot again.

Our last days marched frightfully fast. Janet had learnt that any the most distant allusion to her marriage-day was an anguish to the man who was not to marry her, so it was through my aunt Dorothy that I became aware of Julia Bulsted's kindness in offering to take charge of my father for a term. Lady Sampleman undertook to be hostess to him for one night, the eve of Janet's nuptials. He was quiet, unlikely to give annoy-

ance to persons not strongly predisposed to hear sentences finished and exclamations fall into their right places.

Adieu to my darling! There have been women well won; here was an adorable woman well lost. After twenty years of slighting her, did I fancy she would turn to me and throw a man over in reward of my ultimate recovery of my senses?—or fancy that one so tenacious as she had proved would snap a tie depending on her pledged word? She liked Edbury; she saw the best of him, and liked him. The improved young lord was her handiwork. After the years of humiliation from me, she had found herself courted by a young nobleman who clung to her for help, showed improvement, and brought her many compliments from a wondering world. She really felt that she was strength and true life to him. She resisted Heriot: she resisted a more powerful advocate, and this was the princess Ottilia. My aunt Dorothy told me that the princess had written. Janet either did or affected to weigh the princess's reasonings; and she did not evade the task of furnishing a full reply. Her resolution was unchanged. Loss of colour, loss of light in her eyes, were the sole signs of what it cost her to maintain it. Our task was to transfer the idea of Janet to that of Julia in my father's whirling brain, which at first rebelled violently, and cast it out like a stick thrust between rapidly revolving wheels.

The night before I was to take him away, she gave me her hand with a 'good-bye, dear Harry.' My words were much the same. She had a ghastly face, but could not have known it, for she smiled, and tried to keep the shallow smile in play, as friends do. There was the end.

It came abruptly, and was schoolingly cold and short.

It had the effect on me of freezing my blood and setting what seemed to be the nerves of my brain at work in a fury of calculation to reckon the minutes remaining of

her maiden days. I had expected nothing, but now we had parted I thought that one last scene to break my heart on should not have been denied to me. My aunt Dorothy was a mute; she wept when I spoke of Janet, whatever it was I said.

The minutes ran on from circumstance to circumstance of the destiny Janet had marked for herself, each one rounded in my mind of a blood colour like the edge about prismatic hues. I lived through them a thousand times before they occurred, as the wretch who fears death dies multitudinously.

Some womanly fib preserved my father from a shock on leaving Janet's house. She left it herself at the same time that she drove him to Lady Sampleman's, and I found him there soon after she had gone to her bridesmaids. A letter was for me :—

'Dear Harry,—I shall not live at Riversley, never go there again; do not let it be sold to a stranger; it will happen unless you go there. For the sake of the neighbourhood and poor people, I cannot allow it to be shut up. I was the cause of the chief misfortune. You never blamed me. Let me think that the old place is not dead. Adieu.

'Your affectionate,

'Janet.'

I tore the letter to pieces, and kept them.

The aspect of the new intolerable world I was to live in after to-morrow, paralyzed sensation. My father chattered, Lady Sampleman hushed him; she said I might leave him to her, and I went down to Captain Welsh to bid him good-bye and get such peace as contact with a man clad in armour proof against earthly calamity could give.

I was startled to see little Kiomi in Mabel's company.

They had met accidentally at the head of the street, and had been friends in childhood, Captain Welsh said, adding : ' She hates men.'

' Good reason, when they 're beasts,' said Kiomi.

Amid much weeping of Mabel and old Mrs. Welsh, Kiomi showed as little trouble as the heath when the woods are swept.

Captain Welsh wanted Mabel to be on board early, owing, he told me, to information. Kiomi had offered to remain on board with her until the captain was able to come. He had business to do in the City.

We saw them off from the waterside.

' Were I to leave that young woman behind me, on shore, I should be giving the devil warrant to seize upon his prey,' said Captain Welsh, turning his gaze from the boat which conveyed Kiomi and Mabel to the barque Priscilla. He had information that the misleader of her youth was hunting her.

He and I parted, and for ever, at a corner of crossways in the central city. There I saw the last of one who deemed it as simple a matter to renounce his savings for old age, to rectify an error of justice, as to plant his foot on the pavement ; a man whose only burden was the folly of men.

I thought to myself in despair, under what protest can I also escape from England and my own intemperate mind ? It seemed a miraculous answer :—There lay at my chambers a note written by Count Kesensky ; I went to the embassy, and heard of an Austrian ship of war being at one of our ports upon an expedition to the East, and was introduced to the captain, a gentlemanly fellow, like most of the officers of his Government. Finding in me a German scholar, and a joyful willingness, he engaged me to take the post of secretary to the expedition in the place of an invalided Freiherr von Redwitz. The

bargain was struck immediately: I was to be ready to report myself to the captain on board not later than the following day. Count Kesensky led me aside: he regretted that he could do nothing better for me: but I thought his friendliness extreme and astonishing, and said so; whereupon the count assured me that his intentions were good, though he had not been of great use hitherto—an allusion to the borough of Chippenden: he had only heard of von Redwitz's illness that afternoon. I thanked him cordially, saying I was much in his debt, and he bowed me out, letting me fancy, as my father had fancied before me, and as though I had never observed and reflected in my life, that the opportuneness of this intervention signified a special action of Providence.

The flattery of the thought served for an elixir. But with whom would my father abide during my absence? Captain Bulsted and Julia saved me from a fit of remorse; they had come up to town on purpose to carry him home with them, and had left a message on my table, and an invitation to dinner at their hotel, where the name of Janet was the Marino Faliero of our review of Riversley people and old times. The captain and his wife were indignant at her conduct. Since, however, I chose to excuse it, they said they would say nothing more about her, and she was turned face to the wall. I told them how Janet had taken him for months. 'But I 'll take him for years,' said Julia. 'The truth is, Harry, my old dear! William and I are never so united—for I 'm ashamed to quarrel with him—as when your father 's at Bulsted. He belongs to us, and other people shall know you 're not obliged to depend on your family for help, and your aunt Dorothy can come and see him whenever she likes.'

That was settled. Captain Bulsted went with me to Lady Sampleman's to prepare my father for the change of nurse and residence. We were informed that he had

gone down with Alderman Duke Saddlebank to dine at one of the great City Companies' halls. I could hardly believe it. 'Ah! my dear Mr. Harry,' said Lady Sampleman, 'old friends know one another best, believe that, now. I treated him as if he was as well as ever he was, gave him his turtle and madeira lunch; and Alderman Saddlebank, who lunched here—your father used to say, he looks like a robin hopping out of a larder—quite jumped to dine him in the City like old times; and he will see a great spread of plate!'

She thought my father only moderately unwell, wanting novelty. Captain Bulsted agreed with me that it would be prudent to go and fetch him. At the door of the City hall stood Andrew Saddlebank, grown to be simply a larger edition of Rippenger's head boy, and he imparted to us that my father was 'on his legs' delivering a speech. It alarmed me. With Saddlebank's assistance I pushed in.

'A prince! a treacherous lover! an unfatherly man!'

Those were the words I caught:—a reproduction of many of my phrases employed in our arguments on this very subject.

He bade his audience to beware of princes, beware of idle princes; and letting his florid fancy loose on these eminent persons, they were at one moment silver lamps, at another poising hawks, and again sprawling pumpkins; anything except useful citizens. How could they be? They had the attraction of the lamp, the appetite of the hawk, the occupation of the pumpkin: nothing was given them to do but to shine, destroy, and fatten. Their hands were kept empty: a trifle in their heads would topple them over; they were monuments of the English system of compromise. Happy for mankind if they were monuments only! Happy for them! But they had the passions of men. The adulation of the multitude

was raised to inflate them, whose self-respect had not one prop to rest on, unless it were contempt for the flatterers and prophetic foresight of their perfidy. They were the monuments of a compromise between the past and terror of the future ; puppets as princes, mannikins as men, the snares of frail women, stop-gaps of the State, feathered nonentities !

So far (but not in epigram) he marshalled the things he had heard to his sound of drum and trumpet, like one repeating a lesson off-hand. Steering on a sudden completely round, he gave his audience an outline of the changes he would have effected had he but triumphed in his cause ; and now came the lashing of arms, a flood of eloquence. Princes with brains, princes leaders, princes flowers of the land, he had offered them ! princes that should sway assemblies, and not stultify the precepts of a decent people ' by making you pay in the outrage of your morals for what you seem to gain in policy.' These or similar words. The whole scene was too grotesque and afflicting. But his command of his hearers was extraordinary, partly a consolation I thought, until, having touched the arm of one of the gentlemen of the banquet and said, ' I am his son ; I wish to remove him,' the reply enlightened me : ' I 'm afraid there 's danger in interrupting him ; I really am.'

They were listening obediently to one whom they dared not interrupt for fear of provoking an outburst of madness.

I had to risk it. His dilated eyes looked ready to seize on me for an illustration. I spoke peremptorily, and he bowed his head low, saying, ' My son, gentlemen,' and submitted himself to my hands. The feasters showed immediately that they felt released by rising and chatting in groups. Alderman Saddlebank expressed much gratitude to me for the service I had performed. ' That

first half of your father's speech was the most pathetic thing I ever heard!' I had not shared his privilege, and could not say. The remark was current that a great deal was true of what had been said of the Fitzs. My father leaned heavily on my arm with the step and bent head of an ancient pensioner of the Honourable City Company. He was Julia Bulsted's charge, and I was on board the foreign vessel weighing anchor from England before dawn of Janet's marriage-day.

CHAPTER LVI

CONCLUSION

The wind was high that morning. The rain came in gray rings, through which we worked on the fretted surface of crumbling seas, heaving up and plunging, without an outlook.

I remember having thought of the barque Priscilla as I watched our lithe Dalmatians slide along the drenched decks of the Verona frigate. At night it blew a gale. I could imagine it to have been sent providentially to brush the torture of the land from my mind, and make me feel that men are trifles.

What are their passions, then? The storm in the clouds—even more short-lived than the clouds.

I philosophized, but my anguish was great.

Janet's 'Good-bye, Harry,' ended everything I lived for, and seemed to strike the day, and bring out of it the remorseless rain. A featureless day, like those before the earth was built; like night under an angry moon; and each day the same until we touched the edge of a southern circle and saw light, and I could use my brain.

The matter most present to me was my injustice regarding my poor father's speech in the City hall. He had caused me to suffer so much that I generally felt for myself when he appealed for sympathy, or provoked some pity : but I was past suffering, and letting kindly recollection divest the speech of its verbiage, I took it to my heart. It was true that he had in his blind way struck the keynote of his position, much as I myself had conceived it before. Harsh trials had made me think of my own fortunes more than of his. This I felt, and I thought there never had been so moving a speech. It seemed to make the world in debt to us. What else is so consolatory to a ruined man ?

In reality the busy little creature within me, whom we call self, was digging pits for comfort to flow in, of any kind, in any form ; and it seized on every idea, every circumstance, to turn it to that purpose, and with such success, that when by-and-by I learnt how entirely inactive special Providence had been in my affairs, I had to collect myself before I could muster the conception of gratitude toward the noble woman who clothed me in the illusion. It was to the Princess Ottilia, acting through Count Kesensky, that I owed both my wafting away from England at a wretched season, and that chance of a career in Parliament ! The captain of the Verona hinted as much when, after a year of voyaging, we touched at an East Indian seaport, and von Redwitz joined the vessel to resume the post I was occupying. Von Redwitz (the son of Prince Ernest's Chancellor, I discovered) could have told me more than he did, but he handed me a letter from the princess, calling me home urgently, and even prescribing my route, and bidding me come straight to Germany and to Sarkeld. The summons was distasteful, for I had settled into harness under my scientific superiors, and had proved to my

messmates that I was neither morose nor over-conceited. Captain Martinitz persuaded me to return, and besides, there lay between the lines of Ottilia's letter a signification of welcome things better guessed at than known. Was I not bound to do her bidding? Others had done it: young von Redwitz, for instance, in obeying the telegraph wires and feigning sickness to surrender his place to me, when she wished to save me from misery by hurrying me to new scenes with a task for my hand and head;—no mean stretch of devotion on his part. Ottilia was still my princess; she my providence. She wrote:—

'Come home, my friend Harry: you have been absent too long. He who intercepts you to displace you has his career before him in the vessel, and you nearer home. The home is always here where I am, but it may now take root elsewhere, and it is from Ottilia you hear that delay is now really loss of life. I tell you no more. You know me, that when I say come, it is enough.'

A simple adieu and her name ended the mysterious letter. Not a word of Prince Hermann. What had happened? I guessed at it curiously and incessantly, and only knew the nature of my suspicion by ceasing to hope as soon as I seemed to have divined it. I did not wrong my soul's high mistress beyond the one flash of tentative apprehension which in perplexity struck at impossibilities. Ottilia would never have summoned me to herself. But was Janet free? The hope which refused to live in that other atmosphere of purest calm, sprang to full stature at the bare thought, and would not be extinguished though all the winds beset it. Had my girl's courage failed, to spare her at the last moment? I fancied it might be: I was sure it was not so. Yet the doubt pressed on me with the force of a world of unimagined shifts and chances, and just kept the little

flame alive, at times intoxicating me, though commonly holding me back to watch its forlorn conflict with probabilities known too well. It cost me a struggle to turn aside to Germany from the Italian highroad.

I chose the line of the Brenner, and stopped half a day at Innsbruck to pay a visit to Colonel Heddon, of whom I had the joyful tidings that two of his daughters were away to go through the German form of the betrothal of one of them to an Englishman. The turn of the tide had come to him. And it comes to me, too, in a fresh spring tide whenever I have to speak of others instead of this everlastingly recurring I of the autobiographer, of which the complacent penman has felt it to be his duty to expose the mechanism when out of action, and which, like so many of our sins of commission, appears in the shape of a terrible offence when the occasion for continuing it draws to a close. The pleasant narrator in the first person is the happy bubbling fool, not the philosopher who has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe. The words of this last are one to twenty; his mind is bent upon the causes of events rather than their progress. As you see me on the page now, I stand somewhere between the two, approximating to the former, but with sufficient of the latter within me to tame the delightful expansiveness proper to that coming hour of marriage-bells and bridal-wreaths. It is a sign that the end, and the delivery of reader and writer alike, should not be dallied with.

The princess had invited Lucy Heddon to Sarkeld to meet Temple, and Temple to meet me. Onward I flew. I saw the old woods of the lake-palace, and, as it were, the light of my past passion waning above them. I was greeted by the lady of all nobility with her gracious warmth, and in his usual abrupt manful fashion by Prince Hermann. And I had no time to reflect on the strangeness

of my stepping freely under the roof where a husband claimed Ottilia, before she led me into the library, where sat my lost and recovered, my darling; and, unlike herself, for a moment, she faltered in rising and breathing my name.

We were alone. I knew she was no bondwoman. The question how it had come to pass lurked behind everything I said and did; speculation on the visible features, and touching of the unfettered hand, restrained me from uttering or caring to utter it. But it was wonderful. It thrust me back on Providence again for the explanation —humbly this time. It was wonderful and blessed, as to loving eyes the first-drawn breath of a drowned creature restored to life. I kissed her hand. 'Wait till you have heard everything, Harry,' she said, and her voice was deeper, softer, exquisitely strange in its known tones, as her manner was, and her eyes. She was not the blooming, straight-shouldered, high-breathing girl of other days, but sister to the day of her 'Good-bye, Harry,' pale and worn. The eyes had wept. This was Janet, haply widowed. She wore no garb nor a shade of widowhood. Perhaps she had thrown it off, not to offend an implacable temper in me. I said, 'I shall hear nothing that can make you other than my own Janet—if you will?'

She smiled a little. 'We expected Temple's arrival sooner than yours, Harry.'

'Do you take to his Lucy?'

'Yes, thoroughly.'

The perfect ring of Janet was there.

Mention of Riversley made her conversation lively, and she gave me moderately good news of my father, quaint, out of Julia Bulsted's latest letter to her.

'Then how long,' I asked astonished, 'how long have you been staying with the princess?'

She answered, colouring, 'So long, that I can speak fairish German.'

'And read it easily?'

'I have actually taken to reading, Harry.'

Her courage must have quailed, and she must have been looking for me on that morning of miserable aspect when I beheld the last of England through wailful showers, like the scene of a burial. I did not speak of it, fearing to hurt her pride, but said, 'Have you been here—months?'

'Yes, some months,' she replied.

'Many?'

'Yes,' she said, and dropped her eyelids, and then, with a quick look at me, 'Wait for Temple, Harry. He is a day behind his time. We can't account for it.'

I suggested, half in play, that perhaps he had decided, for the sake of a sea voyage, to come by our old route to Germany on board the barque Priscilla, with Captain Welsh.

A faint shudder passed over her. She shut her eyes and shook her head.

Our interview satisfied my heart's hunger no further. The Verona's erratic voyage had cut me off from letters.

Janet might be a widow, for aught I knew. She was always Janet to me; but why at liberty? why many months at Sarkeld, the guest of the princess? Was she neither maid nor widow—a wife flown from a brutal husband? or separated, and forcibly free? Under such conditions Ottilia would not have commanded my return: but what was I to imagine? A boiling couple of hours divided me from the time for dressing, when, as I meditated, I could put a chance question or two to the man commissioned to wait on me, and hear whether the English lady was a Fräulein. The Margravine and Prince Ernest were absent. Hermann worked in his

museum, displaying his treasures to Colonel Heddon. I sat with the ladies in the airy look-out tower of the lake-palace, a prey to intense speculations, which devoured themselves and changed from fire to smoke, while I recounted the adventures of our ship's voyage, and they behaved as if there were nothing to tell me in turn, each a sphinx holding the secret I thirsted for. I should not certainly have thirsted much if Janet had met me as far half-way as a delicate woman may advance. The mystery lay in her evident affection, her apparent freedom and unfathomable reserve, and her desire that I should see Temple before she threw off her feminine armour, to which, judging by the indications, Ottilia seemed to me to accede.

My old friend was spied first by his sweetheart Lucy, winding dilatorily over the hill away from Sarkeld, in one of the carriages sent to meet him. He was guilty of wasting a prodigious number of minutes with his trumpery 'How d' ye do's,' and his glances and excuses, and then I had him up in my room, and the tale was told; it was not Temple's fault if he did not begin straightforwardly.

I plucked him from his narrator's vexatious and inevitable commencement: 'Temple, tell me, did she go to the altar?'

He answered 'Yes.'

'She did? Then she 's a widow?'

'No, she isn't,' said Temple, distracting me by submitting to the lead I distracted him by taking.

'Then her husband 's alive?'

Temple denied it, and a devil seized him to perceive some comicality in the dialogue.

'Was she married?'

Temple said 'No,' with a lurking drollery about his lips. He added, 'It 's nothing to laugh over, Richie.'

'Am I laughing? Speak out. Did Edbury come to grief overnight in any way?'

Again Temple pronounced a negative, this time wilfully enigmatical: he confessed it, and accused me of the provocation. He dashed some laughter with gravity to prepare for my next assault.

'Was Edbury the one to throw up the marriage? Did he decline it?'

'No,' was the answer once more.

Temple stopped my wrath by catching at me and begging me to listen. 'Edbury was drowned, Richie.'

'Overnight?'

'No, not overnight. I can tell it all in half-a-dozen words, if you 'll be quiet; and I know you 're going to be as happy as I am, or I shouldn't trifle an instant. He went overnight on board the barque Priscilla to see Mabel Sweetwinter, the only woman he ever could have cared for, and he went the voyage, just as we did. He was trapped, caged, and transported; it 's a repetition, except that the poor old Priscilla never came to land. She foundered in a storm in the North Sea. That 's all we know. Every soul perished, the captain and all. I knew how it would be with that crew of his some day or other. Don't you remember my saying the Priscilla was the kind of name of a vessel that would go down with all hands, and leave a bottle to float to shore? A gin-bottle was found on our East coast — the old captain must have discovered in the last moments that such things were on board—and in it there was a paper, and the passengers' and crew's names in his handwriting, written as if he had been sitting in his parlour at home; over them a line—"*The Lord's will is about to be done*"; and underneath—"*We go to His judgement resigned and cheerful.*" You know the old captain, Richie?'

Temple had tears in his eyes. We both stood blinking for a second or two.

I could not but be curious to hear the reason for Edbury's having determined to sail.

'Don't you understand how it was, Richie?' said Temple. 'Edbury went to persuade her to stay, or just to see her for once, and he came to persuasions. He seems to have been succeeding, but the captain stepped on board, and he treated Edbury as he did us two: he made him take the voyage for discipline's sake and "his soul's health."'

'How do you know all this, Temple?'

'You know your friend Kiomi was one of the party. The captain sent her back on shore because he had no room for her. She told us Edbury offered bribes of hundreds and thousands for the captain to let him and Mabel go off in the boat with Kiomi, and then he took to begging to go alone. He tried to rouse the crew. The poor fellow cringed, she says; he threatened to swim off. The captain locked him up.'

My immediate reflections hit on the Bible lessons Edbury must have had to swallow, and the gaping of the waters when its truths were suddenly and tremendously brought home to him.

An odd series of accidents! I thought.

Temple continued: 'Heriot held his tongue about it next morning. He was one of the guests, though he had sworn he wouldn't go. He said something to Janet that betrayed him, for she had not seen him since.'

'How betrayed him?' said I.

'Why,' said Temple, 'of course it was Heriot who put Edbury in Kiomi's hands. Edbury wouldn't have known of Mabel's sailing, or known the vessel she was in, without her help. She led him down to the water and posted him in sight before she went to Captain Welsh's; and when

you and Captain Welsh walked away, Edbury rowed to the Priscilla. Old Heriot is not responsible for the consequences. What he supposed was likely enough. He thought that Edbury and Mabel were much of a pair, and thought, I suppose, that if Edbury saw her he 'd find he couldn't leave her, and old Lady Kane, who managed him, would stand nodding her plumes for nothing at the altar. And so she did: and a pretty scene it was. She snatched at the minutes as they slipped past twelve like fishes, and snarled at the parson, and would have kept him standing till one P.M., if Janet had not turned on her heel. The old woman got in front of her to block her way. "Ah, Temple," she said to me, "it would be hard if I could not think I had done all that was due to them." I didn't see her again till she was starting for Germany. And, Richie, she thinks you can never forgive her. She wrote me word that the princess is of another mind, but her own opinion, she says, is based upon knowing you.'

'Good heaven! how little!' cried I.

Temple did me a further wrong by almost thanking me on Janet's behalf for my sustained love for her, while he praised the very qualities of pride and a spirited sense of obligation which had reduced her to dread my unforgivingness. Yet he and Janet had known me longest. Supposing that my idea of myself differed from theirs for the simple reason that I thought of what I had grown to be, and they of what I had been through the previous years? Did I judge by the flower, and they by root and stem? But the flower is a thing of the season; the flower drops off: it may be a different development next year. Did they not therefore judge me soundly?

Ottilia was the keenest reader. Ottilia had divined what could be wrought out of me. I was still subject to the relapses of a not perfectly right nature, as I

perceived when glancing back at my thought of ' An odd series of accidents ! ' which was but a disguised fashion of attributing to Providence the particular concern in my fortunes : an impiety and a folly ! This is the temptation of those who are rescued and made happy by circumstances. The wretched think themselves spited, and are merely childish, not egregious in egoism. Thither on leads to a chapter—already written by the wise, doubtless. It does not become an atom of humanity to dwell on it beyond a point where students of the human condition may see him passing through the experiences of the flesh and the brain.

Meantime, Temple and I, at two hand-basins, soaped and towelled, and I was more discreet toward him than I have been to you, for I reserved from him altogether the pronunciation of the council of senators in the secret chamber of my head. Whether, indeed, I have fairly painted the outer part of myself waxes dubious when I think of his spluttering laugh and shout ; ' Richie, you haven't changed a bit—you 're just like a boy ! ' Certain indications of external gravity, and a sinking of the natural springs within characterized Temple's approach to the responsible position of a British husband and father. We talked much of Captain Welsh, and the sedate practical irony of his imprisoning one like Edbury to discipline him on high seas, as well as the singular situation of the couple of culprits under his admonishing regimen, and the tragic end. My next two minutes alone with Janet were tempered by it. Only my eagerness for another term of privacy persuaded her that I was her lover instead of judge, and then, having made the discovery that a single-minded gladness animated me in the hope that she and I would travel together one in body and soul, she surrendered, with her last bit of pride broken ; except, it may be, a fragment of reserve traceable in the

confession that came quaintly after supreme self-blame, when she said she was bound to tell me that possibly—probably, were the trial to come over again, she should again act as she had done.

Happily for us both, my wits had been sharpened enough to know that there is more in men and women than the stuff they utter. And blessed privilege now! if the lips were guilty of nonsense, I might stop them. Besides, I was soon to be master upon such questions. She admitted it, admitting with an unwonted emotional shiver, that absolute freedom could be the worst of perils. 'For women?' said I. She preferred to say, 'For girls,' and then 'Yes, for women, as they are educated at present.' Spice of the princess's conversation flavoured her speech. The signs unfamiliar about her for me were marks of the fire she had come out of; the struggle, the torture, the determined sacrifice, through pride's conception of duty. She was iron once. She had come out of the fire finest steel.

'Riversley! Harry,' she murmured, and my smile, and word, and squeeze in reply, brought back a whole gleam of the fresh English morning she had been in face, and voice, and person.

Was it conceivable that we could go back to Riversley single?

Before that was answered she had to make a statement; and in doing it she blushed, because it involved Edbury's name, and seemed to involve her attachment to him; but she paid me the compliment of speaking it frankly. It was that she had felt herself bound in honour to pay Edbury's debts. Even by such slight means as her saying, 'Riversley, Harry,' and my kiss of her fingers when a question of money was in debate, did we burst aside the vestiges of mutual strangeness, and recognize one another, but with an added warmth of love. When

I pleaded for the marriage to be soon, she said, 'I wish it, Harry.'

Sentiment you do not obtain from a Damascus blade. She most cordially despised the ladies who parade and play on their sex, and are for ever acting according to the feminine standard :—a dangerous stretch of contempt for one less strong than she.

Riding behind her and Temple one day with the princess, I said, 'What takes you most in Janet ?'

She replied, 'Her courage. And it is of a kind that may knot up every other virtue worth having. I have impulses, and am capable of desperation, but I have no true courage : so I envy and admire, even if I have to blame her ; for I know that this possession of hers, which identifies her and marks her from the rest of us, would bear the ordeal of fire. I can imagine the qualities I have most pride in withering and decaying under a prolonged trial. I cannot conceive her courage failing. Perhaps because I have it not myself I think it the rarest of precious gifts. It seems to me to imply one half, and to dispense with the other.'

I have lived to think that Ottilia was right. As nearly right, too, in the wording of her opinion as one may be in three or four sentences designed to be comprehensive.

My Janet's readiness to meet calamity was shown ere we reached home upon an evening of the late autumn, and set eye on a scene, for her the very saddest that could have been devised to test her spirit of endurance, when, driving up the higher heath-land, we saw the dark sky ominously reddened over Riversley, and, mounting the ridge, had the funeral flames of the old Grange dashed in our faces. The blow was evil, sudden, unaccountable. Villagers, tenants, farm-labourers, groups of a deputation that had gone to the railway-station to give us welcome, and returned, owing to a delay in our arrival, stood

gazing from all quarters. The Grange was burning in two great wings, that soared in flame-tips and columns of crimson smoke, leaving the central hall and chambers untouched as yet, but alive inside with mysterious ranges of lights, now curtained, now made bare—a feeble contrast to the savage blaze to right and left, save for the wonder aroused as to its significance. These were soon cloaked. Dead sable reigned in them, and at once a jet of flame gave the whole vast building to destruction. My wife thrust her hand in mine. Fire at the heart, fire at the wings—our old home stood in that majesty of horror which freezes the limbs of men, bidding them look and no more.

'What has Riversley done to deserve this?' I heard Janet murmur to herself. 'His room!' she said, when at the South-east wing, where my old grandfather had slept, there burst a glut of flame. We drove down to the park and along the carriage-road to the first red line of gazers. They told us that no living creatures were in the house. My aunt Dorothy was at Bulsted. I perceived my father's man Tollingby among the servants, and called him to me; others came, and out of a clatter of tongues, and all eyes fearfully askant at the wall of fire, we gathered that a great reception had been prepared for us by my father: lamps, lights in all the rooms, torches in the hall, illuminations along the windows, stores of fireworks, such a display as only he could have dreamed of. The fire had broken out at dusk, from an explosion of fireworks at one wing and some inexplicable mismanagement at the other. But the house must have been like a mine, what with the powder, the torches, the devices in paper and muslin, and the extraordinary decorations fitted up to celebrate our return in harmony with my father's fancy.

Gentlemen on horseback dashed up to us. Captain

Bulsted seized my hand. He was hot from a ride to fetch engines, and sang sharp in my ear, 'Have you got him?' It was my father he meant. The cry rose for my father, and the groups were agitated and split, and the name of the missing man, without an answer to it, shouted. Captain Bulsted had left him bravely attempting to quench the flames after the explosion of fireworks. He rode about, interrogating the frightened servants and grooms holding horses and dogs. They could tell us that the cattle were safe, not a word of my father; and amid shrieks of women at fresh falls of timber and ceiling into the pit of fire, and warnings from the men, we ran the heated circle of the building to find a loophole and offer aid if a living soul should be left; the night around us bright as day, busier than day, and a human now added to elemental horror. Janet would not quit her place. She sent her carriage-horses to Bulsted, and sat in the carriage to see the last of burning Riversley. Each time that I came to her she folded her arms on my neck and kissed me silently.

We gathered from the subsequent testimony of men and women of the household who had collected their wits, that my father must have remained in the doomed old house to look to the safety of my aunt Dorothy. He was never seen again.

THE END

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